

॥ နမော တဿ ဘဂဝတော အရဟတော သမ္မာသမ္ဗုဒ္ဓဿ ॥  
 ॥ नमो तस्स भगवतो अरहतो सम्मासम्बुद्धस्स ॥  
 නමෝ තස්ස භගවතො අරහතො සම්මාසම්බුද්ධස්ස.  
 ॥ नमो तस्स भगवतो अरहतो सम्मासम्बुद्धस्स ॥  
 Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

# 1

## An Introduction to the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas

### The Discourses on the Focusses on Mindfulness

(Dīgha Nikāya 22/2:290-315; Majjhima Nikāya 10/1:55-63)

by Piya Tan

#### 1 Origins of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

**1.1 SUTTA VERSIONS.** There are two long suttas in the Pali Canon on satipaṭṭhana: **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta**<sup>1</sup> and **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta**.<sup>2</sup> The Burmese edition (Sixth Council) has added the closing section on the four noble truths (found in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta of the Dīgha) to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta of the Majjhima as well. The Sinhalese, Siamese and Pali Text Society editions, however, retain the traditional version (without the truths section). As a result, the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is longer (about twice) than the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and as such the latter is clearly the older version.<sup>3</sup> The Nikāyas contain many short collections and discourses on satipaṭṭhana, namely,

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta	S 43.5/4:360, 43.12.9/4:363; A 5.122/3:142 (all shorter discourses)
Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta	S 47.1-104/5:141-192 [see also Sato Suttas]
Satipaṭṭhāna Vagga	A 9.64-72/4:457-462
Sati Suttas	S 12.91/2:132, 37.23/4:245 (Gaṅga Peyyāla); A 8.81/4:336 (in Sati Vagga)
Sato Suttas	S 47.2/5:142, 47.35/5:180, 47.44/5:186 (all in Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta)
Sati Vagga	A 8.81-90/4:336-347 [see also Sati Suttas]
Satipaṭṭhāna Vibhaṅga	Vbh 193-207
Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas	S 43.5/4:360, 43.12.9-12/4:363
Satipaṭṭhāna Kathā	Kvu 155-159; Pm 2:232-235

**Analayo**, in his classic study, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization* (2003),<sup>4</sup> notes that, besides the Pāli sources, expositions on *satipaṭṭhāna* are also preserved in Chinese and in Sanskrit, “with intriguing occasional variations from the Pāli presentations,”<sup>5</sup> and makes the following bibliographical note:

<sup>1</sup> D 22/2:305-115.

<sup>2</sup> M 10/1:55-63.

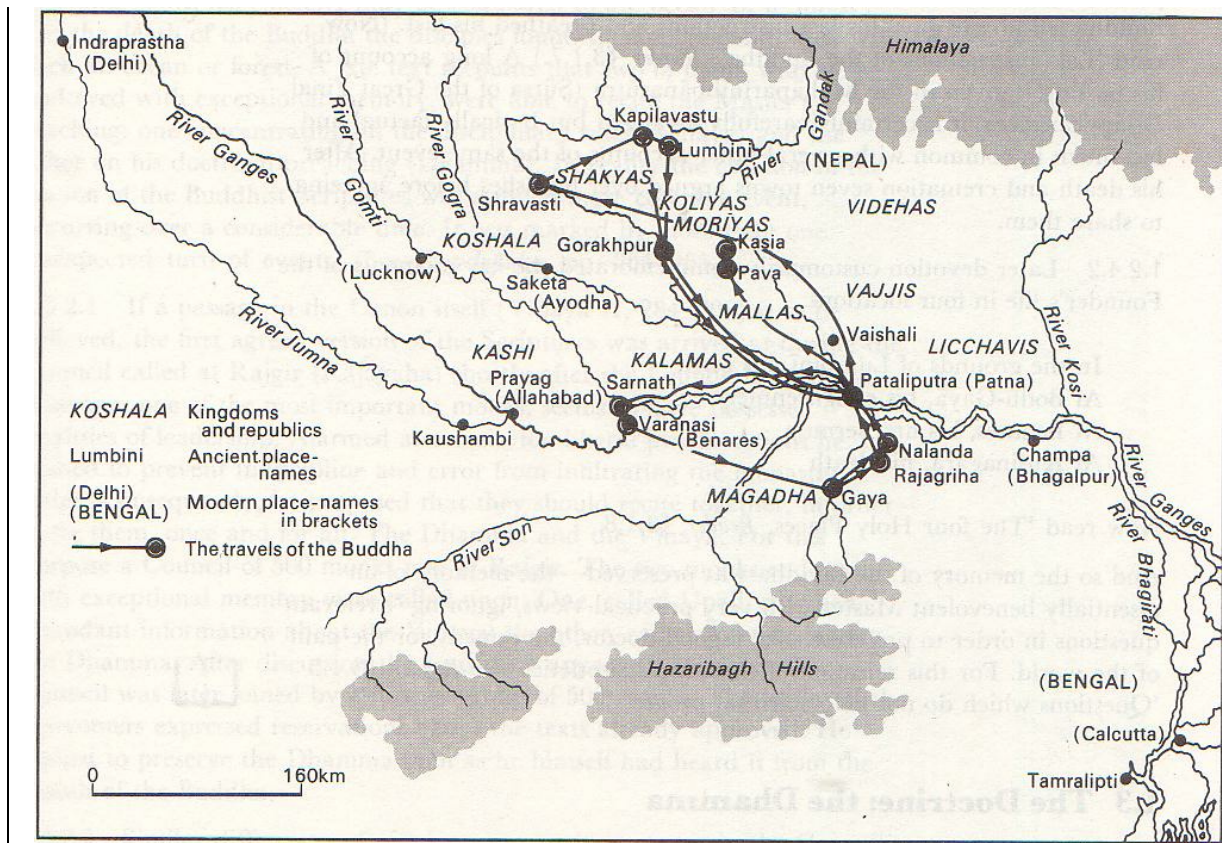
<sup>3</sup> **Analayo** in *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*, observes: “...the detailed instructions found in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta apparently belong to a later period, when the Buddha’s teaching had spread from the Ganges valley to the distant Kammāsa, dhamma in the Kuru country, where both discourses were spoken” (2003:26). See §12 below.

<sup>4</sup> **Sujato** gives the following review of Analayo’s work: “This is a very valuable work, which ably discusses most of the practical and theoretical issues involved in the study of satipaṭṭhana. The author draws from a vast spectrum of sources, displaying an admirably warm appreciation for the perspectives opened up by different scholars and meditators. This work might be considered the culmination of 20<sup>th</sup> Century satipaṭṭhana scholarship. Although Analayo is still influenced by the *vipassanā* interpretation of *satipaṭṭhāna*, his presentation is refreshingly moderate.” (2004b:84 f)

<sup>5</sup> 2003:15.

According to Schmithausen (1976:244), five additional versions are in existence: two complete versions in Chinese (in **the Madhyama Āgama**: T1.26:582b<sup>6</sup> and in the Ekottara Āgama: T 2.125:568a), and three fragmentary versions in Chinese and [in] Sanskrit (these being **the Pañca, vimśati, sāhasrikā Prajñā, pāramitā**, **the Śāriputrābhidharma** (T28.1548: 525a), and **the Śrāvaka, bhūmi**). An abridged translation of one of the complete Chinese versions, **the Nien-ch'u-ching**, being the ninety-eighth sūtra in the Chinese Madhyama Āgama[,] can be found in [Thich] Minh Chau (1991:87-95). A complete translation of this version, and also of the other Chinese version from **the Ekottara Āgama**, this being the first sūtra in the twelfth chapter (Yi Ru Dao) of the Ekottara Āgama, can be found in [Thich] Nhat Hanh (1990b:151-177). A comparison of the Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta with its corresponding Chinese version can be found in Choong (2000:215-218), and in Hurvitz (1978:211-229).  
(Analyo 2003:16 n4; citations normalized)

In **the Anussuta Sutta** (S 47.31), the Buddha mentions the four focusses of mindfulness amongst those things “unheard of before.”<sup>7</sup> **The Brahmā Sutta** (S 47.18) recounts how the newly awakened Buddha reflects the *satipaṭṭhānas* to be the single, direct path to awakening. Brahmā Sahampati then descends from his heaven and applauds the Buddha.<sup>8</sup> **The Magga Sutta** (S 47.43) records the same event by way of reminiscence.<sup>9</sup> In both cases, only the outline of the four *satipaṭṭhānas* are given without any of the other details of the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta or the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.



[J Masson & L Watson, “The Noble Path of Buddhism,” Milton Keynes: Open University, 1987:11]

**Map.** The Middle Country of the Buddha: Note the location of Kuru (Indraprastha) in the northwest corner.

<sup>6</sup> The Taishō citation method is “T{document.page:register & line}.” As such, **T1.26:582b** means “Taishō document 1, vol 26, page 582, 2<sup>nd</sup> register.” See Epilegomena (F)(2) for details.

<sup>7</sup> S 47.31/5:178 f.

<sup>8</sup> S 47.18/5:167-169 = SD 12.

<sup>9</sup> S 47.43/5:185 f.

**1.2 KURU.** Ancient Buddhist records often speak of two Kuru countries: Uttara,kuru (northern Kuru) and Dakkhīṇa,kuru (southern Kuru). Uttara,kuru is described in detail but in mythical terms in **the Āṭānāṭiya Sutta** (D 32),<sup>10</sup> as if referring to some distant past or intergalactic terms. During the Vedic period (the centuries preceding 600 BCE), Kuru country was the centre of brahmanical culture. The Kuru realm roughly filled the triangle formed by Thaneshwar, Hissar and Hastinapur, and including Sonapat, Amin, Karnal and Panipat. By the Epic period (600-0 BCE), this region was known by three different names: (1) Kuru-Jaṅgala, comprising Rohtak, Hansi, Hissar; (2) Kuru,rastra proper between the Ganges and Yamunā, with its capital at Hastinapura; and (3) Kuru,ksetra comprising Thaneshwar, Kaithal and Karnal. The whole kingdom roughly corresponded to modern Thanesar, Delhi and the greater part of Upper Gangetic Doab. The rivers Sarasvati flow on the north side and the Drishadvati or Rakshi on the south side, and through it flow the Aruna, Ashumati, Hiranyavati, Apaya, and Kausiki.

The Kuru kingdom is one of the sixteen great states, or Mahā,janapada, mentioned in the early Buddhist texts.<sup>11</sup> In the Buddha's time, the Kuru realm had already split into two: Kuru and Pañcāla, and Kuru proper was only about three hundred leagues in extent, with its capital at Inda,patta (Skt Indra,pastha; near Delhi), seven leagues wide.<sup>12</sup> During Buddha's time, **Raṭṭha,pāla** of Thulla,kotṭhita, a member of the Kuru royalty joined the order as a monk.<sup>13</sup> The Buddha teaches a number of important suttas in Kuru country [1.3]; for, says the Commentary, they have an ancient reputation for deep wisdom and good health. (MA 1:227)

During the Epic Period, Kuru was ruled by the Yudhiṭṭhila (Skt Yudhiṣṭhira) clan.<sup>14</sup> Early in their history, the Kurus were well known as a monarchy, but during the 6th-5th centuries BCE, they switched to a tribal republican (*saṅgha*) system. The Kurus maintained their alliances with the Yadavas, the Bhojas and the Panchalas through matrimonial bonds. Cāṇakya (4th century BCE) attests that the Kurus follow the *Rāja,śabdopajīvin* (king's consul) constitution (Arthaśāstra 11.1.1-4). The Kurus are mentioned by Pāṇini's (*Aṣṭādhyāyī* 4.1.168-75) (4th century BCE) as one of the fifteen powerful kskatriya states (*janapada*) of his times, with Hastina,pura as its capital. (Its site is an old bed of the Ganges, northeast of Meerut.<sup>15</sup>

**1.3 KAMMĀSA,DAMMA.** The Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (D 22), the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (D 10) and the Madhyama Āgama (Chinese version) locate this discourse near Kammāsa,damma in the Kuru country. The Ekottara Āgama (Chinese version), however, gives its venue as Jeta's Forest, near Sāvattthī. Such discrepancy is a result of the ancient **oral tradition** that preserves the Buddha's teachings. Disciples who have heard the various teachings (some given repeatedly and in various ways in different places over a period of 45 years) placed priority in preserving the accuracy of the teaching. The narrative framework usually reflect the choice of the reciters (*bhāṇakā*). In this case, it is possible that the sutta was taught at both venues: Kammāsa,damma and Sāvattthī. The Pāli Canon, however, only has records of the sutta as being taught at Kammāsa,damma.

The Dīgha Commentary explains that there was no place in town for the Buddha to stay at Kammasa,dhamma, so he stayed outside, in the jungle. The same setting opens **the Mahā,nidāna Sutta**.<sup>16</sup> Kammāsa,damma or Kammāsa,dhamma (also Kammasa~) (DA 2:483) was a Kuru market town (*nigama*). The Kuru kingdom was located in the plain of Kurukṣetra between the Yamunā and the Ganges, where its capitals of Hastinapura (Pali *Hatthina,pura*) (on an old Ganges bed, NE of

<sup>10</sup> As a "city" (*pura*), D 30.7/3:199-202. The Āṭānāṭiya protective verse opens with a salutation not to our present Buddha, but to a past Buddha, Vipassī (D 30.3/3:195), ie, the 19th of the 24 Buddhas mentioned in **Buddha,vaṃsa** & Comys (eg BA 62 on B 1.79). It is possible that Kuru was an ancient city or realm on Jambu,dīpa during prehistorical geologic times when it was "India" was still an island drifting towards the south Asian massif. See **Kosala S 1** (A 10.29/5:59-65) = SD 16.15 Intro (3).

<sup>11</sup> See A 1:213, 4:252, 256.260; also **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16) = SD 9 Intro (16a); also MA 1:225; AA 2:623.

<sup>12</sup> **Mahā Sutasoma J**, J 537/5:484.

<sup>13</sup> See **Raṭṭha,pāla S** (M 82/2:54-74); Tha 769-793..

<sup>14</sup> **Dhūma,kāri J**, J 413/4:400 & **Dasa Brāhmaṇa J**, J 495/5:361.

<sup>15</sup> Jack Finegan, *An Archaeological History of Religions of Indian Asia*, NY: Paragon House, 1989:96. For a detailed study, see Michael Witzel, "Early Sanskritization: Origins and development of the Kuru state," *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies* 1,4 1995:1-26.

<sup>16</sup> D 15.1/2:55 = SD 5.17.

Meerut) and Indra,prastha (Pali *Inda,patta*) (near Delhi),<sup>17</sup> played important roles during the Epic period. This same region is also associated with the stories of the Bhagavad Gītā (Bhagg 1.1).

According to Buddhaghosa (MA 1:227) the people of Kammāsa,damma had a good diet and great wisdom; hence, out of compliment, the Buddha taught them profound suttas: **the (Mahā) Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22; M 10), **the Mahānidāna Sutta** (D 15) and **the Āneñja,sappāya Sutta** (M 106/2:261 ff) (SA 2:87). **The (Cūḷa) Nidāna Sutta** (S 12.60/2:92), **the Sammasa Sutta** (S 12.66/2:107 f) and **the Ariya,vasā Sutta** (A 18.20/5:29 f) were also delivered at Kammāsadamma.

Lily de Silva points out that the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta was only given once “the Dhamma [had] spread from its original seat of Magadha to the outskirts of the Kuru country” (1993:3). The other suttas mentioned above, notes Analayo, “support an association of this location with a relatively evolved stage of development of the early Buddhist community (eg M 1:502 speaks of many followers from various backgrounds).” (2003:16 n7) [12]. **Analayo** in *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*, observes:

...the detailed instructions found in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta apparently belong to a later period, when the Buddha’s teaching had spread from the Ganges valley to the distant Kammāsa,dhamma in the Kuru country, where both discourses were spoken. (2003:26) [11b]

**(1c) TWO VIEWS.** There are two main views regarding the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (here including the longer Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, D 22). The first view, held by traditionalists and fundamentalists, is that it is the most important sutta in the whole Canon,<sup>18</sup> that is to say, in the whole of the Theravāda, and the second view is that it is the latest discourse in the four Nikāyas of the Theravāda. The view that the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas are the most important Theravāda texts is today upheld mainly by the “Vipassanā,vāda” or “insight school” of Mahasi Sayadaw of Burma (proponent of the “dry insight” school)<sup>19</sup> and the Goenka tradition (the other main Vipassanā school).

The second view, now gaining wider acceptance, is that the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is a late Sinhalese work put together around the time when the whole Pāli Canon was written down during the reign of Vaṭṭagāminī “around 20 BCE.” **Sujato**, a forest monk of Ajahn Chah’s lineage,<sup>20</sup> has here put forward some very important and detailed arguments based on a comparative study of Buddhism.<sup>21</sup>

In modern times, **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** has gained cult status. If the Lotus Sutra is “the nearest Buddhist equivalent to a Bible,”<sup>22</sup> then the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (which is an expanded version of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta) is veritably the “Bible” of the Vipassanā,vādins. It is clearly a heavily padded work, whose materials are found elsewhere in the Canon, and is virtually twice as long as the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta itself. It closes with the longest exposition we have on the truths, “clearly

<sup>17</sup> See TW Rhys Davids 1903:27; BC Law 1932:18; Malalasekera, DPPN 1:642; Finegan 1989:96.

<sup>18</sup> **Soma’s** *The Way of Mindfulness* (1981) is a very useful translation of the sutta, its commentary and copious extracts from its sub-commentary (Ṭikā). **Nyanaponika’s** well known translation and commentary, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (1962), although somewhat dated, is still very readable. A very important and insightful modern commentary from the viewpoint of a monk practitioner is found in **Brahmavamso’s** article “The four focuses of mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*)” (*Dhamma Journal* 3,2 2002). For an insightful discussion on *satipaṭṭhāna*, see **Rupert Gethin’s** *The Buddhist Path to Awakening* (2001: ch 1). The most comprehensive study so far is **Analayo’s** *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization* (2003) which has an exhaustive biblio.

<sup>19</sup> Orig name U Sobhana (1904-1982). It was Mahasi’s teacher, **Mingun Jetavan Sayadaw** (orig name U Narada, 1868-1954), who introduced the modern innovation of “watching the rise and fall of the abdomen.”

<sup>20</sup> Ven Sujato, abbot of the Santi Forest Monastery, Bundanoon, NSW, Australia, together with Anālayo, German scholar *sāmaṇera* (Bodhi Monastery, Sussex County, NJ, USA), Roderick Bucknell (Univ of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia), and Stephen Hodge (Religious Dept, University of London) are Buddhist practitioners who are also the modern pioneers of comparative Buddhist textual studies. I have freely quoted from **Sujato’s** *A History of Mindfulness*, and from Analayo’s draft of *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*. In all such citations, I have normalized the diacritics and referencing, and added emphases for easier reading.

<sup>21</sup> Sujato’s thoughts are found in *A History of Mindfulness* (draft, 2004b:175-177). This is perhaps the most important work we have today on comparative study and history of the Pali Canon.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The doctrinal foundations*. London & NY: Routledge, 1989:141.

presenting the four noble truths section as an extended course in *vipassanā*” (Sujato 2004b:176).<sup>23</sup>

The new material (on the truths) is almost identical to **the Sacca Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 141),<sup>24</sup> but the second and third noble truths receive a much more detailed analysis in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Each of these two truths are then tagged to each of the following ten dharmas,<sup>25</sup> repeated for each of the six sense-fields, namely,

the internal sense-faculties (*indriya*),  
 the external sense-objects (*āyatana*),  
 the sense-consciousnesses (*viññāṇa*),  
 the sense-contacts (*samphassa*),  
 feelings (*vedanā*),  
 perception (*saññā*),  
 volition (*sañcetanā*),  
 craving (*taṇhā*),  
 initial application (*vitakka*), and  
 sustained application (*vicāra*).<sup>26</sup>

**Sujato** summarizes the growth of the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas as follows:

At first satipatthana was primarily samatha, the way of getting jhana. Then vipassana was seen to emerge through understanding the process of samadhi in contemplation of dhammas only. Then, for one already well established in all four satipatthanas, vipassana was introduced as an advanced mode of contemplating them.<sup>27</sup> Next vipassana was introduced following each of the four sections.<sup>28</sup>

In the Theravāda **Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** it became affixed at the end of each exercise within the four sections. Finally in **the Paṭisambhidāmagga**, each item in each section (“earth,” “water,” etc) is contemplated from the start in terms of impermanence, suffering, not-self, revulsion, fading away, cessation, and relinquishment.

The ultimate outcome of this process would be to marginalize or discard the original four objects of satipatthana altogether, abstract the vipassana aspect of satipatthana as constituting the real essence of the practice, and therefore treat satipatthana purely as contemplation of impermanence, etc, on any miscellaneous phenomena. We shall see that this step was in fact taken in the next strata of abhidhamma/commentarial literature.

(Sujato 2004b:196; diacritics normalized)

**The Paṭisambhidāmagga**, according to **Sujato**, virtually completes the process of “vipassanizing” *satipaṭṭhāna* (id).

**(1d) DATE OF COMPOSITION.** **The Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22)<sup>29</sup> contains identical materials as **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10), except that the former has a long and very detailed expo-

<sup>23</sup> For more discussion on the section of the noble truths, see here [11].

<sup>24</sup> See SD 11.11.

<sup>25</sup> On “dharmas,” see (5D) n below.

<sup>26</sup> The Saṃyutta Nikāya includes a similar list, although it has the elements (*dhātu*) and the aggregates (*khandha*) for the final two members of the list, rather than initial application and sustained application. Sujato notes: “Several of the *saṃyuttas* [S 18, 25, 25, 26, 27] containing this series are missing from the Sarvāstivāda **Saṃyukta**. Nevertheless, a similar list, again omitting the final two members, is found in the Sarvāstivāda **Satya Vibhaṅga Sūtra**. The only place I know of where the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna list occurs verbatim in the four Nikāyas is in the ‘repetition series’ appended to the Aṅguttara sevens [7.80 ff]. Such sections are usually to be regarded as late, and in the present case the whole passage is ignored by the commentary. These considerations suggest the list, even in its simple form, is probably late.” (Sujato 2005:176)

<sup>27</sup> **(Satipaṭṭhāna) Vihāṅga S** (S 47.40/5:183).

<sup>28</sup> **Rahogata S 2** (S 52.2/5:296 f) = SD 12.16.

<sup>29</sup> **Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22/2:290-315): Chinese parallels are MĀ 98/T1.582b-584b and EĀ 12.1/T2.-568a-569b. **MĀ 98** has been tr by Thich Minh Chau 1991:87-95, Thich Nhat Hahn 1990b:151-167 and Saddhā-loka 1983: 9-15. **EĀ 12.1** has been tr by Thich Huyen-Vi 1989:39-45, Thich Nhat Hahn 1990b:168-177 and Pāsādika 1998: 495-502. MĀ 98 agrees with M 10 on the title *satipaṭṭhāna* (念處) and on locating the discourse near the town Kammāsa,dhamma in the Kuru country, while **EĀ 12.1** takes place in Jetavana near Sāvattihī. (Analayo 2005, normalized)

sition on the four noble truths, covering nearly half of the sutta.<sup>30</sup> Here are the relevant excerpts on the history of the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, given in *A History of Mindfulness* by Sujato:

The Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is the only significant discourse in the Dīgha Nikāya that is not found in the Dharmaguptaka Dīrgha Āgama. This can be no mere oversight, for it is also absent from the Sarvāstivāda Dīrgha. I would therefore consider the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as a leading contender for the title of the latest discourse in the four Nikāyas, a lost waif straying over from the early abhidhamma.

It is worth noting that this is the only discourse in all the existing collections to be duplicated in both the Majjhima and the Dīgha, further evidence of its anomalous character. It is obviously just the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta padded out with further material, and again, the increase is not small.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta treats the four noble truths with a bare enunciation. In the Suttas this kind of formulation often indicates, not vipassanā, but the realization of **stream entry**; thus it could have been originally intended to express the results of the practice of the previous sections.

But the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta gathers much material from elsewhere in the Suttas, ending up with the longest of all expositions of the truths, virtually doubling the length of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and clearly presenting the four noble truths section as an extended course in vipassanā. (Sujato 2004b:176; diacritics normalized)

We may be able to pin down more precisely the date of the formation of the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. We have already noted that it is absent from both the Sarvāstivāda and Dharmaguptaka Dīrghas. Now, the Sarvāstivāda schism was pre-Asoka, and the Dharmaguptaka schism was, according to several sources, somewhat later.<sup>31</sup> So the Dharmaguptaka schism must have been in the time of Asoka or perhaps some time after that.

The Sri Lankan mission arrived in the Asokan period, and the Theravāda had a strong presence on the island from that time. It seems that the headquarters of the Theravāda must have been in Sri Lanka from quite early, for an inscription at Nagārjunikoṇḍa in Southern India refers to a monastery belonging to the ‘Theravādin teachers of Sri Lanka.’<sup>32</sup>

Given their evident doctrinal and textual closeness, it is plausible to think of the Theravāda and the Dharmaguptaka as being the Northern and Southern, or Indian and Sinhalese, branches of **the Vibhajjavāda**, the differences between the schools being as much a matter of geography as doctrine. (The sources indicate that the Dharmaguptaka in fact split, not directly from the Theravāda, but from the Mahīśāsaka, another very similar school.)

(Sujato 2004b:177, diacritics normalized, emphasis added)

We may then ask when these additions may have occurred. Again, there is no direct evidence, but we can seek a convenient peg on which to hang them. This will at least give us something to argue about. Reviewing the timeline of early Sinhalese history, we note that, after the introduction of the Buddhist texts in the time of Asoka, the first literary activity of major importance mentioned is during the reign of Vaṭṭagāmiṇī.

At that time, due to internal strife (war with the Tamils—some things never change!), the lineage of oral transmission of the Tipiṭaka was nearly broken. The Sangha made the momentous decision to write down the Tipiṭaka, asserting that study and preservation of the texts was more important than practice of their contents (a decision that, sadly, has set the agenda for the

<sup>30</sup> D 22.18-21/2:305-314). For a more detailed discussion on **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** and Satipaṭṭhāna S, see Gethin 2001:44-53 & Sujato, *A History of Mindfulness* (draft), 2004 (available from the author at [santiforest-monastery@yahoo.com.au](mailto:santiforest-monastery@yahoo.com.au); see also <http://www.santiforestmonastery.com/writings.htm>). See below §8 and **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** = SD 13.2.2a.

<sup>31</sup> Vasumitra, Śākya,prabha, Vinīta,deva (see J Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, 1983:713-719); Bhavya (Bhāva,viveka), Tārā,nātha, Vasu,mitra, Śāriputra,paripṛcchā, Mañjuśrī,paripṛcchā (see Lamotte, 1988a:529-538). (Sujato’s n, rev)

<sup>32</sup> Schopen 1997:5.

Theravāda until the present day). According to recent scholarly opinion this occurred around 20 BCE. I suggest that this was when the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta was created.

(Sujato 2004b:178; diacritics normalized, emphasis added)

**(1e) WHY THE MAHĀ SATIPAṬṬHĀNA SUTTA WAS CREATED.** Sujato, goes on to explain why the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta was created:

The significance of the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta can best be understood in light of the structure of **the Dīgha Nikāya** as a whole. I think this is clearly the latest of the Nikāyas. As many as a third of the texts are obviously late, and many or most of the remainder may have received their final form at a somewhat late date.

(Sujato 2004b:177; diacritics normalized, emphases added)

The location of the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta in the Dīgha Nikāya and its compendious style are clearly to impress the outsider. **Joy Manné**, in her ground-breaking study, “Categories of Sutta in the Pāli Nikāyas and their implications for our appreciation of the Buddhist teaching and literature” (1990),<sup>33</sup> thinks that the compendious style and debates of the Dīgha is clearly to impress the outsider, so that the collection acts a propaganda to attract new converts and as apologetics to ward off verbal challenges:

[The debates of the Dīgha Nikāya] are records, slanted no doubt in the Buddha’s favour, of public events. They are entertainments for the purpose of propaganda. They serve to teach the monks how to refute challenges that were, presumably, regularly being made. (1990:52)

In other words, the **Nikāya** materials, although named Dīgha (long), Majjhima (middle-length), Saṃyutta (connected) and Aṅguttara (numerical), are not actually classified according to length, but according to their *purpose*. In simple terms, it may be said that the lengthy discourses of **the Dīgha Nikāya** is to impress the outsider on the Buddhist repertoire of philosophy, teachings, methods and successful debates. **The Majjhima** and **the Saṃyutta Nikāyas**, however, contain teachings geared towards the training of the renunciants and devoted practitioners. **The Aṅguttara Nikāya** contains mostly teachings and training for the the laity.

Concerning **the Dīgha Nikāya**, Sujato continues,

Reading the Dīgha alongside **the Majjhima**, the difference is striking. Whereas the Majjhima discourses are almost all straightforward in form, and both pragmatic and profound in content, **the Dīgha** abounds in legendary embroidery, many of the discourses are obvious compilations, and the forms of the texts are often rambling and unfocused.

However, many authentic teachings remain; and the most authentic and often repeated teaching sets out the very heart of Dhamma practice. In the discussion of the GIST<sup>34</sup> we saw that, leaving aside the Brahmajāla Sutta [D 1], **the Dīgha Nikāya** starts off with a series of twelve discourses expounding the gradual training in detail, including the four jhanas. This would be pounded into the heads of the Dīgha students over and again as *the* way of training. In fact[,] the GIST would suggest that this section was the original core around which the Dīgha was formed. Thus the whole of the Dīgha may well have started out as a jhana-manual.

There is little vipassana material in the Dīgha. A striking example of this is the rarity of the five aggregates. Leaving aside the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta [D 22], meditation on the aggregates is mentioned only in the legendary context of the Mahāpadāna Sutta [D14]. Elsewhere the aggregates receive but a bare enunciation in the proto-abhidhamma compilations such as the Saṅgīti [D 33] and Dasuttara Suttas [D 34]. It seems likely that the compilers of the Theravāda Dīgha Nikāya, at some point after the Dharmaguptaka schism, wished to include some more vipassana material to counterbalance the strong samadhi [mental concentration] emphasis.

<sup>33</sup> See Joy Manné, “Categories of Sutta in the Pāli Nikāyas and their implications for our appreciation of the Buddhist teaching and literature.” *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15 1990:29-87.

<sup>34</sup> GIST = General Integrated Sutta Theory. See §1d below.

Now, there are three texts treating mindfulness practice in detail in the Majjhima: **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** [M 10], **the Ānāpānasati Sutta** [M 118], and **the Kāyagatāsati Sutta** [M 119]. The latter two clearly emphasize samadhi, so in choosing which of the three to ‘promote’ to the Dīgha the compilers chose the most vipassana oriented text and padded it out with further vipassana material to redress the imbalance of the Dīgha Nikāya as a whole. And in context, this was most reasonable. But when the discourse is divorced from its context and treated as a blueprint for a meditation technique different from, even superior to, the main-stream samadhi practice, a shift of emphasis becomes a radical distortion of meaning.

(Sujato 2004b:177; diacritics normalized, emphases added)

**(1f) GENERAL INTEGRATED SUTTA THEORY (GIST).** What is said here has to be understood in the light of Sujato’s **General Integrated Sutta Theory (GIST)**, which is “a general hypothesis on the origin and development of the Buddhist texts” (2004b:13). In chapter 2 of *A History of Mindfulness* (2004), Sujato explains his theory:

The GIST is “**General**” because it encompasses the entire gamut of available early scriptures, that is, the Suttas, Vinayas, and Abhidhammas of all the schools preserved in Pali and Chinese. It is “**Integrated**” because it offers a synoptic presentation of the essential relations between these texts. It deals with “**Suttas**” not just in the obvious sense that the Sutta Piṭaka contains the most important of the doctrinal teachings, but because it suggests a reevaluation of the meaning of the word “sutta” in the earliest texts.

For this reason we will not follow the usual practice of referring to any text in the Sutta Piṭaka as a “sutta,” but will use more neutral terms such as “discourse,” reserving “*sutta*” in italics to indicate the special meaning that the term carried in earlier usage. We may, however, continue to use “Sutta” with a capital to refer to the early texts in general as contrasted with the Abhidhamma and other later works.

And finally, the GIST is a “**theory**” because it is not certain. No theory can ever fully capture the truth. I think a successful theory is, firstly, one that addresses a genuine problem[;] secondly, explains a variety of facts in a way that is at least plausible as [an] alternative, and thirdly, is suggestive of further inquiry...

The basic idea of GIST was sparked by the findings of the renowned Taiwanese scholar monk **Yin Shun**, who himself relied on earlier Japanese and Taiwanese research, none of which is widely known in English-speaking circles.... My information comes from the summary of Yin Shun’s work<sup>35</sup> in **Choong Mun-Keat’s** *The Fundamental Teachings of Early Buddhism*,<sup>36</sup> and through conversations with and the writings of **Roderick Bucknell** [of the University of Queensland].

The GIST asks **three questions**. Firstly, what are the earliest texts? This question is applied to the three historical strata: the first discourses, the first collection of discourses, and the first Abhidhamma. The three strata are each established independently; that is, we do not rely on our identification of the earliest discourses in order to establish the earliest collection, and we do not rely on either of these to establish the earliest Abhidhamma. Rather, to establish each layer[,] we use two basic criteria: the concordance of the texts and the testimony of the tradition.

An important confirmation for the validity of these criteria is the elegance of the results. This becomes apparent when we answer the second question: how are the three strata related to each other?

And the third question is: how are the three strata related to the rest of the Nikayas/-Agamas? The results of this inquiry, I might mention in advance, are entirely mundane; so mundane, in fact, that they could easily be dismissed as merely stating the obvious. But what is important here is not so much the conclusions as the method; we are trying to put on a more scientific basis what, up till now, has been largely a matter of subjective opinion.

<sup>35</sup> Yin Shùn, *Yuánshǐ Fójiào Shèngdiǎn zhī Jìchéng* 原始佛教聖典之集成 [The Formation of Early Buddhist Texts], Taipei: Zhengwen Chubanshe, 1983.

<sup>36</sup> Choong Mun-keat, *The Fundamental Teachings of Early Buddhism*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000. Choong (currently lecturing at the University of New England, Australia), was Bucknell’s student.



(Sujato 2004b:13 f; diacritics normalized, emphases added)

## 2 “Mahā” in the title

Several translators have discussed the reason for the prefix *mahā* of the sutta title.<sup>37</sup> The word *mahā* can mean “great” or “greater”: the former refers to the centrality of the text, while the latter means that it contain more materials or more vital materials than its namesake prefixed with *cūḷa*. **The Dīgha Nikāya** has a total of 7 suttas prefixed with *mahā*-, namely,

- D 14 Mahāpādāna Sutta
- D 15 Mahā Nidāna Sutta
- D 16 Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta
- D 17 Mahā Sudassana Sutta
- D 19 Mahā Govinda Sutta
- D 20 Mahā Samaya Sutta
- D 22 Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

The prefix *mahā* in these titles clearly reflect the central importance of the sutta’s subject matter. None of these suttas have a *cūḷa* counterpart in the Dīgha itself. **The Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22), however, seems to have **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10) as counterpart. Let us look at the Majjhima suttas first before we discuss what is significant here. **The Majjhima Nikāya** has the following suttas that have *cūḷa* or *mahā* in their titles:

### 1.1 Mūla,pariyāya Vagga (Chapter on the root teaching)

M 10 Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta	[D 22 No Majjhima <i>cūḷa</i> counterpart]
M 12 Mahā Sīha,nāda Sutta	M 11 Cūḷa Sīha,nāda Sutta
M 13 Mahā Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta	M 14 Cūḷa Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta
M 28 Mahā Hatthi,padōpama Sutta	M 27 Cūḷa Hatthi,padōpama Sutta
M 29 Mahā Sārōpama Sutta	M 30 Cūḷa Sārōpama Sutta

### 1.4 Mahā Yamaka Vagga (Great chapter on the twins)<sup>38</sup>

M 32 Mahā Gosīṅga Sutta	M 31 Cūḷa Gosīṅga Sutta
M 33 Mahā Gopālaka Sutta	M 34 Cūḷa Gopālaka Sutta
M 36 Mahā Saccaka Sutta	M 35 Cūḷa Saccaka Sutta
M 38 Mahā Taṇhā,sāṅkhaya Sutta	M 37 Cūḷa Taṇhā,sāṅkhaya Sutta
M 39 Mahā Assa,pura Sutta	M 40 Cūḷa Assa,pura Sutta

### 1.5 Cūḷa Yamaka Vagga (Smaller chapter on the twins)

M 43 Mahā Vedalla Sutta	M 44 Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta
M 46 Mahā Dhamma Samādāna Sutta	M 45 Cūḷa Dhamma Samādāna Sutta

### 2.2 Bhikkhu Vagga (Chapter on the monks)

M 62 Mahā Rāhulōvāda Sutta	M 147 Cūḷa Rāhulōvāda Sutta <sup>39</sup>
M 64 Mahā Māluṅkyā,putta Sutta	M 63 Cūḷa Māluṅkyā,putta Sutta

### 2.3 Paribbājaka Vagga (Chapter on the wanderers)

M 73 Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta	[A 3.57 Vaccha,gotta Sutta]
M 77 Mahā Sakul’udāyi Sutta	M 79 Cūḷa Sakul’udāyi Sutta

### 3.1 Devadaha Vagga (Chapter on Devadaha)

M 110 Mahā Puṇṇamā Sutta	M 109 Cūḷa Puṇṇamā Sutta
--------------------------	--------------------------

### 3.2 Anupada Vagga (Chapter of one by one)

<sup>37</sup> See esp IB Horner M:H 1:xii-xiv.

<sup>38</sup> As the chapter title states, it consists wholly of pairs of suttas, one with the prefix *cūḷa*- and the other with *mahā*-.

<sup>39</sup> Note this almost unique situation where the *cūḷa* counterpart of Mahā Rāhul’ōvāda S is found not juxtaposed, but in another chapter altogether.

M 117 Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta

[No *cūla* counterpart]3.3 Suññata Vagga (Chapter on emptiness)

M 112 Mahā Suññata Sutta

M 121 Cūla Suññata Sutta

3.4 Vibhaṅga Vagga (Chapter on analysis)

[M 133 Mahā Kaccāna Bhadd'eka,ratta Sutta]

[No *cūla* counterpart]

M 136 Mahā Kamma,vibhaṅga Sutta

M 135 Cūla Kamma,vibhaṅga Sutta

Although there is **the Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 73), it has no *cūla* counterpart in the Majjhima, but there is a **Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (A 3.57) in the Aṅguttara Nikāya. **The Mahā Kamma,vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 136) is unique in that the *mahā* in the title qualifies *kamma,vibhaṅga*, not the *sutta* because the phrase *mahā kamma,vibhaṅga* occurs in this sutta (M 136.6, 13-16). “Great” (*mahā*) here has the sense of “comprehensive” and does not connote any grandiosity. **The Mahā Kaccāna Bhadd'eka,-ratta Sutta** (M 143) is special here because *mahā* is part of Kaccāna's name, not of the sutta title, and as such has no counterpart sutta title with a *cūla* prefix.

**The Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22) contains identical materials as **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10), except that the former has a long and very detailed exposition on the four noble truths (D 22.18-21/2:305-314) [8].<sup>40</sup> The location of the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta in the Dīgha Nikāya and its compendious style is clearly to impress the outsider.<sup>41</sup> It is difficult to say which of the two is the older, but both probably drew materials from an older tradition or an urtext (root text). It is, however, clear that **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** as a meditation guide is complete in itself, even without the long section on the four noble truths. As such, for practical purposes, the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta may be regarded as the most important Buddhist text on meditation and mindfulness.

### 3 Terminology

**3.0 Preamble.** Here we will examine the important terms used in satipatthana by way of these three categories:

**(i) The basic satipatthāna terms [3.1-3.3].** We will study the following key terms and expressions: “Here a monk” (*idha bhikkhu*), satipatthana (*satipaṭṭhāna*), “meditation sign” (*nimitta*), *ekāyana.maggo*, and “gaining the right way” (*ñāyassa adhiḡamāya*).

**(ii) the basic satipatthana formula**<sup>42</sup> [3.4-3.6] or “auxiliary formula,”<sup>43</sup> or simply, “basic formula.”

**(iii) the insight refrain [3.7-3.10].**<sup>44</sup> “vipassana refrain” or “expanded satipatthana formula.”<sup>45</sup>

The following observations and summary by **Analayo** is helpful in our understanding of the purpose of the refrains:

Throughout the discourse, a particular formula follows each individual meditation practice. This *satipaṭṭhāna* “refrain” [ie **the insight refrain**] completes each instruction by repeatedly emphasizing the important aspects of the practice.<sup>46</sup> According to this refrain, “*satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation covers internal and external phenomena, and is concerned with

<sup>40</sup> For a more detailed discussion on **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** and Satipaṭṭhāna S, see Gethin 2001:44-53.

<sup>41</sup> See Joy Manné, “Categories of Sutta in the Pāli Nikāyas and their implications for our appreciation of the Buddhist teaching and literature.” *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15 1990:29-87.

<sup>42</sup> This is Gethin's term, 2001:45-53, 53-59 & passim. **The insight refrain** will be discussed below [3.6].

<sup>43</sup> This is Sujato's term, 2004:113.

<sup>44</sup> “The insight refrain.” Analayo uses “**the satipatthana refrain**” here, 2003:92-116. However, I prefer using this term for the former, which I have as such called “the basic satipatthana formula” to avoid confusion.

<sup>45</sup> This is Gethin's term, 2001:45-53, 53-59 & passim. **The satipatthana refrain** will be discussed below [3.7-10].

<sup>46</sup> The fact that this “refrain” is indispensable to each meditation exercise is shown by the remark concluding each occurrence of the “refrain” (eg M 1:56): “that is how a monk in regard to the body (feelings, mind, *dhammas*) abides contemplating the body (feelings, mind, *dhammas*).” This remark connects the exposition to the question asked at the outset of each *satipaṭṭhāna* (eg 1:56): “how does a monk in regard to the body (etc) abide contemplating the body (etc)?” [Analayo's fn]

their arising and passing away. The “refrain” also points out that mindfulness should be established merely for the sake of developing bare knowledge and for achieving continuity of awareness. According to the same “refrain,” proper *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation takes place free from any dependence or clinging.

...Each time, the task of the “refrain” is to direct attention to those aspects of *satipaṭṭhāna* that are essential for proper practice. The same pattern also applies to the start of the discourse, where a general introduction to the topic of *satipaṭṭhāna* through the “direct path” statement is followed by the “definition” [ie **the basic satipatthana formula**], which has the role of pointing out its essential characteristics. In this way, both the “definition” and the “refrain” indicate what is essential. Thus, for a proper understanding and implementation of *sati-paṭṭhāna*, the information contained in the “definition” and the “refrain” is of particular importance. (2003:19 f)

## I. BASIC SATIPATTHANA TERMS

### 3.1a “Here, bhikshus, a monk” (*idha bhikkhave bhikkhu*) (D 22.1c(A) = M 10.3(A)).

As in most of the Buddha’s teachings, the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is addressed to “**bhikshus [monks]**” (*bhikkhū*), that is, those who are part of the richest field for sowing the seeds of awakening.<sup>47</sup> In the parable of the lotuses in the pond, they belong to the second, in-between, group of lotuses—those bobbing up and down on the water level—that is, hesitating between the true and the false, wavering between good and evil. They would either be saved or be lost, depending on whether or not they hear the Dharma.<sup>48</sup>

In the parable of the lotuses in the pond, the second group of lotuses—those bobbing up and down on the water level—also refer to the nuns, laymen and laywomen who are ready to benefit from the Teaching. The metaphors do mix here, in terms of the fourfold company—the monks, the nuns, the laymen and the laywomen—who are ready to listen to the Teaching and gain sainthood, or at least happiness here and hereafter.

The fruit of spirituality does not work on an institutional basis (whether one is a monk or not), but whoever diligently toils in the field of satipatthana will reap its rich harvest. The Commentaries explain this in two ways, thus:

But then, do only the monks cultivate these focusses of mindfulness and not the nuns and others? Nuns and others, too, cultivate them. But it was on account of the fact that the monks are the “foremost community” (*agga,parisa*), that he [the Blessed One] said, “**Here, a monk.**”

Or, alternatively, he said this in reference to the state of a monk (*bhikkhu,bhāva*), since one who has entered upon this way, whether a deva or a human, is regarded as a monk (*bhikkhu*), in keeping with what is said (in the Dhammapada), thus:

Though well adorned [finely clad], if he fares in calmness,  
At peace, tamed, self-controlled, living the holy life,  
Having put down the rod towards all beings—  
He is a brahmin, he is a recluse, he is a monk.<sup>49</sup>

(Dh 142; Kvu:SR 157 f; DA 3:756 = MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251)

The word “**here**” (*idha*) refers to the Teaching (*sāsane*) (MA 1:241), that is, “in this Teaching” (*idha sāsane*), showing that satipatthana is found only in the Buddha’s Teaching. In an important sense, satipatthana practice prepares one for the realization of not-self, that is, the letting go, in due course, of all concepts and to experience true reality directly for oneself. In this sense, satipatthana is unique to Buddhism.

**3.1b Satipaṭṭhāna (D 22.1b = M 10.2).** The expression *cattāro satipaṭṭhānā* is often translated

<sup>47</sup> The parable of the fields, **Desanā S** (S 42.7/4:315-317): see “Layman Saints” = SD 8.6(4).

<sup>48</sup> The parable of the lotuses in the pond, **Desanā S** (S 42.7/4:315-317): see “Layman Saints” = SD 8.6(3).

<sup>49</sup> *Alankato ce pi samam careyya | santo danto niyato brahmacārī | sabbesu bhūtesu nidhāya daṇḍam | so brāhmaṇo so samaṇo so bhikkhu.*

as “the four stations of mindfulness” or “the foundations of mindfulness,” where the term is resolved as *sati* + *paṭṭhāna* (favoured by the Commentaries),<sup>50</sup> that “emphasizes the objective bases of practice: the body, feelings, mind, and phenomena.” (S:B 1504). The sutta’s key term, *satipaṭṭhāna*, however, is best resolved as *sati* + *upaṭṭhāna*, rendering it as “the establishment of mindfulness,” an analysis that is well supported, that is,<sup>51</sup>

- (1) by the adjective *upaṭṭhita*, *sati* (“with the mindfulness established”), describing one who has set up mindfulness (D 2:79; M 1:20, 43; S 54.13/5:331, A 4:233; Pm 1:121).
- (2) by the expression *parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhapetvā* (“with the mindfulness set up before him”) (V 1:24; D 1:71; M 1:219; S 1:170, 5:311; A 1:182 = 183 = 184; Vbh 252);
- (3) by **the Paṭisambhidā** which consistently glosses *sati* with *upaṭṭhāna*; and
- (4) by the Sanskrit *smṛtyupasthāna*.

As such, the sutta’s key term, *satipaṭṭhāna*, as we shall soon see here, is best resolved as *sati* + *upaṭṭhāna* (lit “placed near”), following the old Sanskrit name, **Smṛty-upasthāna Sūtra**. The Pali *sati* originally means “memory,” but in Buddhist usage, also denotes “present awareness.” TW Rhys Davids brilliantly renders it as “mindfulness” (1910) which has stuck ever since.<sup>52</sup> The Skt *smṛti* adopted by BHS is used in brahminical religion and philosophy to mean “oral tradition”; but the Buddhists adopted it as meaning “memory, mindfulness.”

Analayo (amongst other scholars) states that the Commentaries “derive *satipaṭṭhāna* from the word ‘foundation’ or ‘cause’ (*paṭṭhāna*)” (2003:29). LS Cousins, however, disagrees with this view:

I do not think this is correct. Rather, they give a traditional exegesis in those terms, partly for hermeneutical reasons but perhaps also because it was too well established to omit and then go on to give as their preferred alternative the explanation in terms of *upaṭṭhāna* (eg MA 1:238: *athavā...upaṭṭhānaṭṭhena paṭṭhānaṃ*). It is noteworthy, however, that even the former type of explanation tends to be given explanations which import the notion of *upaṭṭhāna* (eg VbhA 214).  
(Cousins 2006:132)<sup>53</sup>

**Anālayo**, in his comparative study of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, renders *satipaṭṭhāna* as “presence of mindfulness,”<sup>54</sup> and explains why in a footnote to his comparative study of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta:

By translating *satipaṭṭhāna* as “presence of mindfulness,” I propose to derive this compound from *sati* + *upaṭṭhāna*. This derivation suggests itself from its Sanskrit equivalent *smṛtyupasthāna*, and from the fact that numerous Pali passages combine *sati* with the verb *upaṭṭhahati* (cf eg M 3:23,16, which contrasts *upaṭṭhita sati* to being without mindfulness; or M 3:85,11, where *upaṭṭhita sati* is the result of practising *satipaṭṭhāna*; or the expression *sati sūpaṭṭhitā* at A 2:244,10; or the causative form *satim upaṭṭhapessanti* at A 4:22,3; or the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta itself at M 1:56,14+32, which speaks of *satim upaṭṭhapetvā* and of *satim paccupaṭṭhitā*).<sup>55</sup>

The most common translation of *satipaṭṭhāna* is however “foundation of mindfulness,” based on a commentarial derivation of the compound as *sati* + *paṭṭhāna* (PmA 1:238 and Vism 678). This commentarial derivation is not convincing, since according to the usual pattern for sandhi formation (cf Ñāṇatiloka 1910:4) one would expect *sati* + *paṭṭhāna* to result in a doubling of the first consonant of the second term, in *satippaṭṭhāna* instead of *satipaṭṭhāna*. Moreover the noun *paṭṭhāna* does not occur at all in the early discourses, but comes into use only in the historically later Abhidhamma and commentaries, making it highly improbable that *paṭṭhāna* should have been used for the formation of the *satipaṭṭhāna* compound.

The problem of translating *satipaṭṭhāna* as “foundation of mindfulness” is that it tends to move emphasis from the attitude of being mindful to the objects for being mindful, a shift of emphasis which easily can lead to mistaking the means for the end. Yet what really matters

<sup>50</sup> MA 1:238; Vism 678.

<sup>51</sup> See S:B 1915 n122; Analayo 2003:29 f.

<sup>52</sup> D:RD 2:327 et al & Introd.

<sup>53</sup> See Cousins’ comments of the etym of *satipaṭṭhāna*, loc cit.

<sup>54</sup> In an earlier draft, he had used “establishing of mindfulness.”

<sup>55</sup> Comy appears to be aware of

when developing *satipaṭṭhāna* is the mental attitude inculcated through mindfulness meditation, not its objects. Hence to translate *satipaṭṭhāna* as “presence of mindfulness” seems a better way of giving justice to this compound from the viewpoint of Pali grammar and from the perspective of its practical implications. While MĀ 98 seems to correspond closer to the commentarial understanding of *satipaṭṭhāna*, since it renders it as “sphere of mindfulness” (T 1.-582b11: 念處), EĀ 12.1 places a stronger emphasis on the effect of *satipaṭṭhāna* on the mind, by rendering it as “settling of the mind” (T II 568a4: 意止). (Analyo 2005:1)

Occasionally, however, in such texts as **the Samudaya Sutta**,<sup>56</sup> the term *satipaṭṭhāna* clearly refers to the objective bases of mindfulness (although this is an exception to the rule). For the sake of simplicity and comprehensiveness, however, I have rendered *satipaṭṭhāna* as “**focus of mindfulness**,” since “focus” refers both to the subjective sense of *focussing* one’s mind, as well as the objective sense of focussing *on* the meditation object as appropriate. It can be both a verb (reflecting the deliberate act of being mindful of the meditation object) as well as a noun (reflecting the object of meditation). This is also the term favoured by Brahmavaṃso.

Rupert Gethin opens his book, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, with an important discussions on the term *satipaṭṭhāna* and the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.<sup>57</sup> **Sujato**, in *A History of Mindfulness*, discusses the meanings and usages of *satipaṭṭhāna*:

The term *satipaṭṭhāna* (establishing of mindfulness) resolves into *sati* and *upaṭṭhāna*. The alternative resolution into *sati* and *paṭṭhāna*, though favoured by the commentaries, is spurious. The difference between the two is that while *upaṭṭhāna* expresses the subjective act of establishing or setting up mindfulness, *paṭṭhāna* would refer to the “foundations” of mindfulness, the objective domains on which mindfulness is established.

The basic meaning of *upaṭṭhāna* is to “stand near,” and it is commonly used to mean “serve,” “approach,” even “worship.” Taranatha Tarkavacaspati’s Sanskrit dictionary gives the meaning of “causing to remember” (especially past lives), which would be identical with *sati*, but as this does not seem to be attested in any early text it is probably under Buddhist influence. We have already remarked that the closest parallel in the Upanishads is the term *upasana*.

*Upaṭṭhāna* occasionally occurs in *vipassana contexts*, though not, so far as I know, in any central collection. In the Aṅguttara sixes, one is encouraged to “establish perception of impermanence [suffering, not-self]” regarding all conditioned activities.<sup>58</sup> Here, although it is not in the context of satipaṭṭhāna, we see a similar subjective role for *upaṭṭhāna*, with the object in locative case, as in *satipaṭṭhāna* and elsewhere.

In the context of satipaṭṭhāna, *upaṭṭhāna* suggests that one is to make mindfulness stand close by, to be present, to serve the meditation. *Sati and upaṭṭhāpeti stand in the same organic relation as do saddhā with adhimuccati, or viriya with ārabhāti*. These terms, all commonly used in conjunction, indicate a reiterative emphasis. Just as one “decides faith” or one “rouses up energy,” so too one “establishes mindfulness.” In fact, we could render this phrase “one does satipaṭṭhāna,” the difference being merely verbal.

Because the verb *upaṭṭhāpeti* has such an organic relationship with the noun *sati* they are found together in a variety of settings, just as *sati* is found everywhere. But by far the most important, common, and characteristic use is in the gradual training, where the phrase refers to taking a seated posture for meditation before the abandoning of the hindrances and entering *jhana*. (2004b:108; diacritics & refs normalized)

As such, Sujato, points out, the function of *satipaṭṭhāna* is as a support for *dhyana*, as suggested in the common Sutta idiom given above, whose significance is often lost in translation. This relationship is clearly evident in the Suttas, but two citations would suffice as examples.

The very first discourse of **the Magga Saṃyutta** stresses the causal relationship between the factors of the path including mindfulness and samadhi: “For one of right mindfulness, right samadhi

<sup>56</sup> S 47.42/5:184.

<sup>57</sup> Gethin 2001:21-68 (ch 1).

<sup>58</sup> A 6.102-4/3:443 f.

comes to be” (S 45.1/5:2). An important definition of “**noble right samadhi**” (*ariya sammā,samādhi*) found in all four Nikāyas, also emphasizes that the path factors, culminating in right mindfulness, functions to support samadhi.

What, bhikshus, is noble right samadhi, with its vital conditions, with its prerequisites?

There are these (seven factors): right view, right thought [intention], right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness.

One-pointedness of mind, bhikshus, equipped with these seven factors, is called noble right samadhi “with its vital conditions, with its prerequisites (*sa,upaniso sa,parikkhāro*).”<sup>59</sup>

(D 18.27/2:216 f; M 117.3/3:71; S 45.28/5:21; A 7.42/4:40)

The same principle is spelled out in **the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44), where the nun Dhamma,dinnā gives this analysis of samadhi to the layman Visākha:

One-pointedness of mind, friend Visākha, is samadhi. The focusses of mindfulness (*sati,-paṭṭhāna*) are the basis for samadhi. The four right strivings are the prerequisite of samadhi.

The cultivation, development, and making much of these same principles is the development of samadhi therein. (M 44.12/1:301)

The Commentary here notes that the four focusses of mindfulness are the basis of samadhi (*samādhi,-nimitta*)<sup>60</sup> in the sense of being its condition (MA 2:363). Bodhi says that here it “would seem incorrect to translate *nimitta* as ‘sign,’ in the sense of either distinctive mark or object” (M:ÑB 1242 n464). Below we will discuss the various meanings of *nimitta* [3.1d].

**3.1c Sati (mindfulness).** In Buddhist meditation, it is vital to distinguish two stages, that of observation and that of taking action. The Buddha speaks of this approach (*pariyāya*) in **the Desanā Sutta**,<sup>61</sup> where he points out two successive aspects of his teaching (*desanā*), the first of which is to recognize evil as evil, while the second is to become disenchanted with, to let go of and to be free from such evil.<sup>62</sup> The reason for this is simple: (1) one calmly assesses the situation; (2) then one takes the proper action. The remedy is only effective when the problem is clearly understood.

The practice of the first step in meditative action—one calmly assesses the situation—is demonstrated in the succinct **Ārakkha Sutta**,<sup>63</sup> here given in full:

Bhikshus, there are these four reasons that diligent mindfulness (*appamado sati*) should be made the mind’s guard. What are the four?

(1) “May my mind not harbour lust (*rāga*) for anything that induces lust.” For this reason, diligent mindfulness should be made the mind’s guard.

(2) “May my mind not harbour hate (*dosa*) for anything that induces hate.” For this reason, diligent mindfulness should be made the mind’s guard.

(3) “May my mind not harbour delusion (*moha*) for anything that induces delusion.” For this reason, diligent mindfulness should be made the mind’s guard.

(4) “May my mind not be intoxicated for anything that induces intoxication [infatuation]

<sup>59</sup> The term *parikkhāra* more familiarly refers to a monk’s four requisites: bowl, robes, dwelling, and medicine. Here, it obviously means the factors that are “pre-requisite” for attaining dhyana. In later usage, it is replaced in this sense by its etymological twin *parikamma*, usu rendered something like “preparatory work.” (Sujato’s fn)

<sup>60</sup> D 3:226, 242; M 1:249, 301, 3:112; A 1:115, 2:17, 3:23, 321. Although at M 1:301, this sign of concentration is related to the 4 satipatthanas, at M 3:112, it refers to the practice of samatha meditation, since it speaks of quietening the mind leading up to dhyanas. Cf *samatha,nimitta*, “sign of calmness,” where S 5:105 recommends as food for the awakening factor of concentration (also at D 3:213; S 5:66; cf Dhs 1357; Vism 1.113, 125; Abhs 9.5 = Abhs:SR 54, Abhs:BRS 9.18-20, Abhs:WG 328 (see index); *Manual of a Mystic* 2); and *citta,nimitta*, “sign of the mind” (S 5:151; A 3:423), which Tha 85 relates to non-sensual happiness, “an instance reminiscent of the experience of non-sensual happiness during absorption” (Analayo 2003:237). Cf A 4:419, which recommends developing the “sign,” which in this passage too represents dhyanic attainment. See §3.1d below.

<sup>61</sup> It 2.2.2/33.

<sup>62</sup> *Pāpaṃ pāpakato passathā ti...pāpaṃ papakato disvā tattha nibbindatha virajjatha vimuccathā ti.*

<sup>63</sup> A 4.117/2:120.

(*mada*). For this reason, diligent mindfulness should be made the mind's guard.

Bhikshus, when a monk's mind lusts not after what induces lust because it is free from lust;

when his mind hates not after what induces hate because it is free from hate;

when his mind is not deluded due to what induces delusion because it is free from delusion;

when his mind is not intoxicated due to what induces intoxication, because it is free from intoxication;

then, such a monk will not shake, tremble or quake; he will not fall into fear, nor will he follow the teachings of other recluses [follow outside teachings].<sup>64</sup> (A 4.117/2:120)

Mindfulness (*sati*), as such, provides the necessary information for a proper application of right effort, and monitors if it is too much or too little, but mindfulness otherwise remains aloof, merely watching what is going on. Although by itself, mindfulness actually does nothing, it can interact and cooperate with other mental factors. In **the Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36), for example, we see mindfulness coexisting with intense effort in the Bodhisattva's ascetic practices, where after describing the self-mortifying exercise, the Buddha declares:

But although tireless energy was aroused in me, and undistracted mindfulness was established, my body was overstrained and ill at ease because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.<sup>65</sup>

Even during his excessive self-torturing asceticism, the Bodhisattva was able to maintain mindfulness.

Mindfulness is especially vital for sense-restraint (*indriya, samvara*), that is, the guarding of the six sense-doors. **The Mahā Assapura Sutta** (M 39) defines sense-restraint as follows:

Bhikshus, you should train yourself thus:

“We will guard the sense-doors.

On seeing a form with the eye, we will not grasp at its sign (*nimitta*) or at its features (*anuvyañjana*).<sup>66</sup>

On hearing a sound with the ear, we will not grasp at its sign or at its features.

On smelling a smell with the nose, we will not grasp at its sign or at its features.

On tasting a taste with the tongue, we will not grasp at its sign or at its features.

On feeling a touch with body,<sup>67</sup> we will not grasp at its sign or at its features.

On cognizing a mind-object with the mind, we will not grasp at its sign or at its features.” (M 39.8/1:273)

**The Kimsuka Sutta** (S 35.204)<sup>68</sup> gives the simile of a frontier city to illustrate the guarding of the sense-doors for the purpose of mental cultivation, wherein the “gate-keeper” is a designation for mindfulness.<sup>69</sup>

Suppose, monk, a king has a frontier city with strong ramparts, walls, arches, and with six gates. The gate-keeper posted there would be wise, competent, and intelligent; one who keeps out strangers and admits acquaintances. A swift pair of messengers would come from the east...the west...the north...the south and ask the gate-keeper, “Where, good man, is the lord of this city?” He would reply, “He is sitting in the central square [where the four roads

<sup>64</sup> *So na chambhati na kampati na vedhati na santāsam āpajjati na ca pana samaṇa, vacana, hetu pi gacchati.* Aṅguttara Comy says that the last remark refers to an arhat (AA 3:122).

<sup>65</sup> M 36.21-25/1:243-245 = SD 1.12.

<sup>66</sup> “We will not grasp...,” *na nimitta-g, gāhī nānuyyañjana-g, gāhī*. Here we find the contrasting words *nimitta* (“sign,” here meaning its manifestation as a whole) and *anuvyañjana* (a detail or particular feature). See foll §3.1d esp (2).

<sup>67</sup> *Kāyena phoṭṭhabbam phusitvā*, lit “having touched a touch with the body.”

<sup>68</sup> S:B ref is S 35.245. On the difference between the PTS ed (Feer) and Bodhi's numbering, see S:B 23-26.

<sup>69</sup> For a discussion on this passage in connection with the “intermediate state” (*antarā, bhava*), see SD 2.17(8).

meet]. Then the swift messenger would deliver their message of things as they are to the lord of the city and leave by the route by which they have come.

I have made up this simile, monk, to show you the meaning, that is to say: “**The city**” is a designation for this body consisting of the four elements, originating from mother and father, built up of rice and gruel, subject to impermanence, to being worn and rubbed away, to breaking apart and dissolution. “**The six gates**” are a designation for the six internal sense-bases. “**The gate-keeper**” is a designation for mindfulness. “**The swift messengers**” are a designation for calmness and insight. “**The lord of the city**” is a designation for consciousness. “**The central square [where four roads meet]**” (*siṅghāṭaka*) is a designation for the four great elements—the earth element, the water element, the fire element, the wind element.’ “**A message of things as they are**” is a designation for Nirvana. **The route by which they have come** is a designation for the Noble Eightfold Path....

(S 35.204/4:194 f)

The purpose of sense-restraint, as mentioned in the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas, is to prevent the arising of covetousness (*abhijjhā*) and discontent (*domanassa*), as is mentioned in the basic satipaṭṭhana formula for each of the four satipaṭṭhanas<sup>70</sup> [§II]. Sense-restraint or mindfulness at the sense-doors does not imply that one should avoid all sense stimuli (“contacts”). In **the Indriya, bhāvanā** (M 152), the Buddha points out that if by simply avoiding seeing and hearing one could develop them, then the blind and the deaf would have developed faculties!<sup>71</sup>

Sense-restraint is clearly an essential part of satipaṭṭhana practice, where the purpose is not to react in the face of desire and discontent [4.2e]. Mindfulness, as such, is an alert, non-reactive state of mind<sup>72</sup> of “letting come, letting go,” that through sustained effort (*ātāpi*) leads one to mental concentration (*samādhi*). In short, mindfulness “does not change experience, but only deepens it” (Analyo 2003:58).

**3.1d Nimitta.** The result of keeping proper focus leads to the rise of the meditation sign (*nimitta*). Its etymology is uncertain, but could be related to √*mā*, “to measure,” as in *nimmināti* (v), “measures out, creates, produces miraculously, creates”; *nimmāna* (n), “creation, production”;<sup>73</sup> *nimmita* (adj, pp), “measured out, created (supernaturally).”<sup>74</sup> The word *nimitta* has various meanings, some of which are examined here.<sup>75</sup> In the Suttas, *nimitta* is used in the following senses:

**(1) Object**, also called “bases (*āyatana*), that is, the six sense-objects or objects presented at the six sense-doors, namely, eye-object (visual form), ear-object (sound), nose-object (smell), tongue-object (taste), body-object (touch), mind-object (thoughts etc)” (D 1:70).

**(2) Outward appearance** or general appearance, or simply “sign,” that is, “the distinguishing feature by which one recognizes or remembers something,”<sup>76</sup> which would also include “general appearance.” “Sign” is often contrasted with “details” or “particulars” (*anuvyañjana*) (M 39.8/1:273). Of one who restrains his senses it is said, “He does not seize at the sign” (*na nimitta-g, gāhi*) of an object.<sup>77</sup>

In terms of perception, this “sign” (*nimitta*) is “related to the first evaluation of the raw sense data, because of which the object appears to be, for example, ‘beautiful’ (*subha, nimitta*) or ‘irritating’ (*paṭigha, nimitta*), which then usually leads to subsequent evaluations and mental reactions.”<sup>78</sup> (Ana-

<sup>70</sup> D 22.1c/2:290 = M 10.3/1:56.

<sup>71</sup> M 152.2/3:298. Cf Tilakaratne 1993:72.

<sup>72</sup> On the “non-reactive state of mind,” see Analyo 2003:175 f.

<sup>73</sup> D 11.75/1:218; M 101.22/2:222; A 3.61.1/1:173.

<sup>74</sup> D 1:18, 56, 219.

<sup>75</sup> See also Harvey 1986:31-33, 237 n21.

<sup>76</sup> Analyo 2003:225. For example, **Potaliya S** (M 54.3/1:360) refers to the outer aspect of being a householder, or at **V 3:15. The Raṭṭhapāla S** (M 82) relates how a slave woman, in a similar manner, recognizes monk who was the former son of her master, returning after a long absence, by “the characteristic features of his hand, his feet, and his voice.” (M 82.18/2:62)

<sup>77</sup> D 2.64/1:70 = D:RD 1:80n; M 33.7/1:221, 38.35/1:269; Vism 1.53-59/20-23.

<sup>78</sup> In **Nīvaraṇa, pahāna Vaggo** (A 1:3), sensual desire arises due to unwise attention to the “sign of beauty,” (A 1.2.1/1:3) and aversion arises due to the “sign of repulsion” (A 1.2.2/1:3). **The Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43) explains that greed, hate and delusion are each a “maker of signs” (*nimitta, karaṇa*) (M 43.37/1:298), ie, they



layo 2003:225 f). The Commentaries say that “**sign**” (*nimitta*) here refers to a grasping arising through one’s sensual lust (*chanda, rāga, vasena*) or on account of one’s view (*diṭṭhi, matta, vasena*); “**features**” (*anuvyañjanā*) here refers to finding delight by grasping at another’s limb or body part (eyes, arms, legs, etc).<sup>79</sup>

(3) **Basis.** As mentioned at the end of the previous section [3.1b], the four focusses of mindfulness are the basis of samādhi (*samādhi, nimitta*) in the sense of being its condition (MA 2:363). **Bodhi** says that here it “would seem incorrect to translate *nimitta* as ‘sign,’ in the sense of either distinctive mark or object.<sup>80</sup> According to **Analayo**, “an object, image or concept which, on being meditated upon, induces *samādhi* (*jhāna*) is a *nimitta*” (2003:237 n21). As such, the term here can also be translated, somewhat loosely though, as “condition.”

(4) **Condition of existence.** In the **Paṭisambhidā, magga**,<sup>81</sup> *nimitta* appears in a repetitive set following *uppāda* (arising, origin), *pavatta* (existence, occurrence).

The following meanings of *nimitta* are found in the Commentaries:

(5) **Sign, omen, portent, prognostication.**<sup>82</sup> **The Brahma, jāla Sutta** (D 1) mentions “divination by way of signs” (*nimittam*),<sup>83</sup> which the Commentary glosses as “the study of omens” (*nimitta, -sattham*).<sup>84</sup> The term *pubba, nimitta* (lit “preceding sign”), referring to signs preceding an event, portents, warnings, or foreshadowings, is found in the Suttas.<sup>85</sup> Thirty-two signs before the Bodhi-sattva’s birth are mentioned in the Jātaka.<sup>86</sup>

(6) **Karmic sign** (*kamma, nimitta*), that is, a past karma taking effect, and **destiny sign** (*gati, -nimitta*), that is, an indication of one future rebirth. They arise as mental objects of the last karmic consciousness before death (*maraṇ’āsanna, kamma*).<sup>87</sup>

(7) **Mental reflex** or meditation sign, which arises when the mind is fully focussed. The Buddhist Dictionary gives the following definition of this usage of *nimitta*:

“Mental (reflex-) image,” obtained in meditation. In full clarity, it will appear in the mind by successful practice of certain concentration-exercises and will then appear as vividly as if seen by the eye. The object perceived at the very beginning of concentration is called **the preparatory image** (*parikamma, nimitta*).

The still unsteady and unclear image which arises when the mind has reached a weak degree of concentration is called **the acquired image** (*uggaha, nimitta*).

An entirely clear and immovable image arising at a higher degree of concentration is **the counter-image** (*paṭibhāga, nimitta*). As soon as this image arises, the stage of neighbourhood (or access) concentration (*upacāra, samādhi*) is reached.<sup>88</sup>

In **the Upakkilesa Sutta** (M 128), when Anuruddha complains about his inability to progress—when “light and a vision of forms” arise in his meditation, he simply let them cease—but the Buddha advises that he should penetrate the sign (*nimittam paṭivijjhitabban*), that is, he should actually “acquire,” that is, master or know—that is, “note” or “label”—the sign [3.9ac], or regard it as being

---

ascribe a false significance to things as being impermanent, pleasurable, self, or beautiful (ie in terms of the 4 perversions, *vipallāsa*, A 2:52; Pm 2:80; Bodhi 1980:4, 25 n27.). **The Uddesa Vibhaṅga S** (M 138) describes how when consciousness follows the sign, it becomes “tied and shackled by the gratification derived in the sign,” and thereby becomes fettered to the sign (M 138.10/3:225). It is also possible that a grasping at a “sign” may be followed by various types of thought that could be regarded as “association” (**Vitakka Saṅṭhāna S**, M 20.3/1:119).

<sup>79</sup> D 3:249; A 1:256, 3:319, 375 f, 4:33, 418 f; J 1:420; Pm 1:60, 91 f, 164, 170, 2:39, 64; Vbh 193 f; Nm 2:390; Nc 141, 141; DhsA 400, 402; cf MA 1:75, 4:195; SA 3:4, 394; Nc 1:55; DhA 1:74.

<sup>80</sup> M:ÑB 1242 n464 ad **Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta**, M 44.12/1:301.

<sup>81</sup> Pm 1.18/1:10. See BDict: *nimitta* (5); also Analayo 2003 225 n35.

<sup>82</sup> J 1:11, 48, 59; Miln 79, 178, 298; Vism 577.

<sup>83</sup> D 1.21/1:9.

<sup>84</sup> DA 1:92.

<sup>85</sup> S 5:154. 278, 554; It 76 (cf Divy 193, on the impending death of a god).

<sup>86</sup> J 1:50; some are given at DA 1:61.

<sup>87</sup> PmA 3:571; DhsA 411, 417; VbhA 156, 160. BDict: Karma III,3.

<sup>88</sup> For details, see BDict: *kaṣiṇa, samādhi*. For other meanings and usages of *nimitta*, see PED sv.

impermanent (and as such, unsatisfactory and without an abiding self), in order to overcome various mental obstructions.<sup>89</sup>

### 3.2 EKĀYANA, MAGGO (D 22.1b = M 10.2)

**3.2a Interpretations.** The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta opens with the Buddha's declaring that the four focusses of mindfulness is the *ekāyana magga*. The term *ekāyana*, resolved as *eka* (one), *ayana* (going), and *magga* (path). Buddhaghosa, however, is uncertain of its exact meaning.<sup>90</sup> In his Majjhima Commentary, **Buddhaghosa** gives five alternative senses of the Pāli expression *ekāyano maggo*.<sup>91</sup>

- (1) *eka, maggo na dvedhā, patha, bhūto*: “the one way, comprising a path that is not (broken) in two,” ie, an undivided going, a direct path.
- (2) *ekena ayitabbo*:<sup>92</sup> “that which should be reached by one,” ie, to be travelled by oneself (not through someone else; self-effort).
- (3) *ekassa ayano*: “the going of one,” ie, to be travelled by one alone.
- (4) *ekasmim ayano*: “the going (found only) in one,” ie, found only in the Buddha's Teaching.
- (5) *ekam ayati*: “it goes to the one,” ie, it leads to the one goal, nirvana.

(DA 743 = MA 1:229 f; cf PmA 486 ≠ NmA 52 f)

It is almost impossible to find an English word to encompass all these senses (assuming that is all *ekāyana* means), except perhaps the awkward literal expression, “the one-going way.” As the examples from the commentary show, some traditional Theravadins (such as Buddhaghosa) do not have a clear idea of what the phrase means. This shows that either the word itself is very vague (in which case further research is of dubious value), or that they have forgotten the meaning.

The Chinese translations, too, apparently face difficulties in trying to translate the term *ekāyano maggo*, which is rendered differently in almost every occurrence, when clearly shows the translators do not understand the term. In some cases, they render it as if from a different Indic original. For example,

**Ekāyana Sūtra** (Mahāsaṅghika):

“there is one entrance path” (有一入道 yòu yī rù dào = *eka āyatana magga*).

**Smṛty-upasthana Sūtra** (Sarvāstivāda): “there is one path” (有一道 yòu yī dào).

**Saṃyukta Āgama**: “one vehicle path” (一乘道 yī chéng dào = *eka yāna*). [3.2c]

The expression *ekāyano maggo* has been variously translated as “the one way,” “the only way,” or “the one and only way,” sometimes with a triumphalist tone. Other translations include: “the one-going path,”<sup>93</sup> “the one-way path,” “a path that goes one way only,”<sup>94</sup> the “only direct way” heading for awakening, and “the direct path.”<sup>95</sup>

The closest translation of *ekāyana* is perhaps “the way for one (only). Another possible, but free, rendition is “**the direct path**,” as used by Nyanatiloka,<sup>96</sup> Ñāṇamoli<sup>97</sup> and **Analayo**, who himself admits that this translation only “follows the first of these explanations” (2003:27) [3.2c]. However, he further notes, “[t]ranslating *ekāyano* as ‘direct path’ has the advantage of avoiding the slightly dogmatic nuance conveyed by the translation ‘the only path,’ noted [for example] by Conze (1962:51n).” (2003:29 n36). **LS Cousins**, in his review of Analayo's *Satipaṭṭhāna*, however, disagrees, saying:

Ven Anālayo indicates (p27 n36) that this [the rendering of the term *ekāyana* as “direct path”] has the advantage of avoiding the “slightly dogmatic nuance” conveyed by the translation “the only path.” I don't quite see that this is so, since it seems to imply that other paths are at

<sup>89</sup> M 128.15/3:157; Comy explains this by saying that “You should know the cause for that” (*taṃ vo kāraṇaṃ jānītabbāṃ*, MA 4:207). See Analayo, 2003:237 n21.

<sup>90</sup> Gethin discusses Buddhaghosa alternatives at MA 229 in 2001:59-66. See also Analayo 2003:27-29.

<sup>91</sup> For citations, see CPD: *ekāyana*. See also Analayo 2003:27-29.

<sup>92</sup> *Ayitabbo*, *ayano*, and *ayati* here come from *√i* (to go); *ayati* = *eti*, “he goes, goes toward; he reaches, obtains; he reaches (a state); he is involved (in)” (see DP: *eti*<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>93</sup> “The one going way” is Anālayo's tr (2005).

<sup>94</sup> Ñāṇamoli's tr.

<sup>95</sup> This last one is Analayo's tr, see 2003:21-29.

<sup>96</sup> “*der direkte Weg*,” Nyanatiloka 1910:91 n7.

<sup>97</sup> Ñāṇamoli (M:ÑB) 2001:145.

best indirect or longer. In fact, the claim that this is based upon the commentarial expression *na dvedhā, patha, bhūto* does not appear correct—that says nothing about whether the path is direct or indirect, only that it is a path without alternatives at which one can lose one’s way. In fact, I would like [to] take its original meaning in Buddhist sources to be in essence that of a path which will unfailingly lead one to a single goal. (So M 1:74 and compare *Divyāvadāna* 158). (Cousins 2006:131)

**Ñāṇamoli**, in a note to his Majjhima translation of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, says:

Though there is neither canonical nor commentarial basis for this view, it might be maintained that *satipaṭṭhāna* is called *ekāyana magga*, the direct path, to distinguish it from the approach to meditative attainment that proceeds through the *jhānas* or *brahmavihāras*. While the latter can lead to Nibbāna, they do not do so necessarily but can lead to sidetracks, whereas *satipaṭṭhāna* leads invariably to the final goal. (M:ÑB 1189 n135)

**Sujato** comments on the term *ekāyana maggo*:

As often, the commentaries are concerned to show how integrated this teaching is within the path as a whole. Note especially the *Ṭikā*’s wise reminder that the phrase *ekāyana* was not meant to exclude the other path factors, including right samadhi. The idea that *ekāyana* was meant to imply a distinction between *satipaṭṭhāna* and *jhāna* is just a product of modern polemics, [I] fear.

I have done extensive research on this point and have come to exactly the opposite conclusion (so there you go!). The word *eka* in meditation contexts always means *ekaggatā* or *ekodibhūta*, that is, *jhāna* or *samādhi*. Since *satipaṭṭhāna* is the *samādhinimitta*, ie, the cause or basis of *samādhi*, [I] think *ekāyana* means that the purpose, or at least one central purpose, of *satipaṭṭhāna* is to get into *jhāna*. There are several suttas in the Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta that emphasize this aspect of *satipaṭṭhāna*, using these kinds of terms.

(Sujato, Pali Yahoo website comment, 29 Apr 2005)

**3.2b The directness of *ekāyana*.** **Analayo**, in *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path of realization*, remarks that “[i]n order to assess the meaning of a particular Pāli term, its different occurrences in the discourses need to be taken into account” (2003:28). The term *ekāyana*, he notes, besides occurring in several discourses in relation of *satipaṭṭhāna*, also occurs in the Mahā Sīhanāda Sutta and the Tevijja Sutta. **The Mahā Sīhanāda Sutta** (M 12) has this simile:

Suppose, Sāriputta, there were a fiery coal pit deeper than a man’s height, full of glowing coals with neither flame nor smoke; and then a man scorched and exhausted by hot weather, weary, parched and thirsty, came by a one-way path leading directly (*ekāyanena maggena*) to that same coal pit. Then a man with good sight on seeing him would say: “This person, behaving thus, conducting himself thus, having taken such a path, will come to this same coal pit.” And then later on he sees that he has fallen into that coal pit and is experiencing extremely painful, racking, piercing feelings. (M 12.37/1:74)

The sutta repeats the same “one-way path leading directly” (*ekāyana magga*) to a cesspool, a tree growing on uneven ground, a tree growing on even ground, a man, and a pond.<sup>98</sup> Here *ekāyana* clearly expresses the goal or direction rather than exclusivity (as connoted in the translation “the only way/path”). “To say that this path leads ‘directly’ to the pit would be more fitting than saying it is ‘the only’ path leading to the pit,” concludes Analayo. (2003:28)

**The Tevijja Sutta** (D 13) opens with two young brahmin friends, Vāsetṭha and Bhāradvāja, each arguing that only his own teacher’s teaching is the only correct path to fellowship [union] with Brahmā (*brahma, saḥavyatā*, that is, rebirth in the Brahmā world). Each of them claim thus of his own teacher’s teaching:

“This is the only straight road, this is the path for one, that leads on [to salvation] for one

<sup>98</sup> M 12.38-42/1:74-77. Cf M:ÑB 1188 n135.

who has fellowship [union] with Brahmā...”

*Ayam eva uju, maggo, ayam añjasāyano niyyāniko niyyāti tak, karassa Brahma, sahavyatā-ya...ti* (D 13.4-5/1:235 f)

Here **Analayo** notes,

Although in this context an exclusive expression like “the only path” might be expected, the qualification *ekāyano* is conspicuously absent. The same absence recurs in a verse from the Dhammapada [Dh 274],<sup>99</sup> which presents the noble eightfold path as “the only path.” These two instances suggest that the discourses did not avail themselves of the qualification *ekāyano* in order to convey exclusiveness.

Thus *ekāyano*, conveying a sense of directness rather than exclusiveness, draws attention to *satipaṭṭhāna* as the aspect of the noble eightfold path most “directly” responsible for uncovering a vision of things as they truly are. That is, *satipaṭṭhāna* is the “direct path,” because it leads ‘directly’ to the realization of Nibbāna.<sup>100</sup>

This way of understanding also fits well with the final passage of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Having stated the *satipaṭṭhāna* practice can lead to the two higher stages of realization within a maximum of seven years, the discourse closes with the declaration: “because of this, it has been said—this is the direct path.” This passage highlights the directness of *satipaṭṭhāna*, in the sense of its potential to lead to the highest stages of realization within a limited period of time. (2003:28)

### 3.2c “The path where only one goes by oneself to the one-pointedness of mind.”

Based on meditation practice and the Commentaries—and my discussion with Ajahn Sujato—the better renditions of *ekāyana magga* would be “the path for the one” or “the path when only one goes by oneself to the one-pointedness of mind” or “the path for one only leading to the one [unification of mind],”<sup>101</sup> that is, meditation in personal effort, and it is the direct way to accomplishing one-pointedness of mind.<sup>102</sup> (The two latter however are explanations rather than translations.) [3.2a]

In reply to my query if the translation “the direct path to the one” correctly reflects *ekāyano magga*, **Sujato** says,

The *magga* is path; where is *-āyana*? How about “path to unification”? One of the implications, if we accept the Brihadaranyaka as the prime context within which to interpret this phrase, is that it had already reached a certain level of abstraction and mystic connotations before the Buddha, so a strictly literal translation is going to be difficult.

(Sujato, email communication, 1 May 2005)

While I agree that Sujato’s rendition of *ekāyano magga* as “the path of convergence” accurately reflects, in the technical sense, the expression as used in the Bṛhad Āraṇyaka and similar ancient texts, I think the Buddha phrase has a much broader sense.

I first began with a literal translation: “the path leading to the one,” where “leading” is *āyana*. This is then refined, or rather adjusted, with the general reader (esp a practitioner) in mind. The rationale behind my choice of translation is also inspired by **Jan Nattier**’s recent remark:

Clearly no one of these choices [of translation method] will be optimal cases, for the resulting product will have different purposes and are appropriate for different audiences. Indeed it should be acknowledged at the outset that there is no such thing as ‘the perfect translation.’

<sup>99</sup> See next section.

<sup>100</sup> Gethin 1992:64, commenting on *ekāyano*, explains: “what is basically being said is that the four *satipaṭṭhāna* represents a path that leads straight and directly all the way to the final goal.” [Analayo fn]

<sup>101</sup> This tr may be regarded as a “double translation,” where an etymology is repeated: *eka + āyana* = “the going for one,” and *eka* = “the one.” On “double translation,” see Eric Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, 1959:336 n140 to ch 2; Jan Nattier, *A Few Good Men* (Ugra Paripṛcchā study), 2003:153 n35; & Daniel J Boucher, “The textual history of the *Raṣṭrapālāparipṛcchā*: Notes on its third-century Chinese translation,” 1999:489-494.

<sup>102</sup> See prev n.

Every translation is also a creation, a scholarly artifact which is no less the culturally shaped product of a particular time and place than is the ancient or medieval version from which the translator chooses to work. Precisely because of this, the translator’s responsibility—in my view—includes an attempt to articulate the intention behind her choices as clearly as possible, and thus to provide the reader with a clear sense of the decisions that have led to the production of the work she is about to read.”

(Nattier, *A Few Good Men* (Ugra Paripṛcchā study), 2003:202)

I hope not only to present the original intentions of the early text (as far as we can safely know it) and to present a canonical guide and inspiration for mindfulness practice. For this reason, I have given an amplified translation that includes the anglicized Pali—*ekāyana*—and a descriptive rendition, and so suggest rendering *ekāyano ayaṃ bhikkhave maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā* as:

Bhikshus, this is **the *ekāyana* path** [the path where only one goes by oneself to the one-pointedness of mind],<sup>103</sup> for the purification of beings...

**3.2d The noble eightfold path.** Gethin, on the basis of his survey of Sanskrit and Pali literature, thinks that *ekāyana* expresses two common ideas:

First, a place where only one goes, giving the senses of “lonely” or “narrow” [Edgerton BHSD]; secondly, the “going to one.” Given that nowhere is the sense “one and one only” clearly and definitely the proper sense, and in most cases definitely not, it seems rather perverse to adopt this sense in the *satipaṭṭhāna* context. (2001:63)

As such, this expression does not refer to “*vipassanā*” or any type of meditation as the only way. On the term *ekāyana*, **Bodhi** notes: “Though the Pāli expression is often rendered ‘the sole way’ or ‘the only way,’ this translation has little support either from the suttas or the commentaries.” (S:B 1505). This “only way,” as clear from such passages as **Dh 273-274**, is the noble eightfold path, of which *satipaṭṭhāna* (as right mindfulness) is only one of its eight factors, a point also noted by Nāṇavīra<sup>104</sup> and by Brahmavamsa.<sup>105</sup> This is confirmed by Buddhaghosa in his commentary on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MA 1:231).<sup>106</sup>

The eightfold (path) is the best of paths;  
The four statements<sup>107</sup> are the best of truths;  
Detachment from lust is the best of things—  
Of the two-footed, the one with eyes (is best).

*maggān’atṭhaṅgiko seṭṭho*  
*saccānaṃ caturo padā*  
*virāgo seṭṭho dhammānaṃ*  
*dipadānaṃ ca cakkhumā*

There is only this path, no other,  
For the purity of vision.  
As such, keep to this path—  
This is the bewilderment of Māra.

*eso va maggo natth’añño*  
*dassanassa visuddhiyā*  
*etaṃ hi tumhe paṭipajjathā*  
*mārass’etaṃ pamohanaṃ* (Dh 273 f)

**Sujato**, in his draft of *A History of Mindfulness*, a groundbreaking historical study of the development of the tradition behind the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, says of the famous expression:

Finally we come to that most definitive of *satipaṭṭhāna* slogans: ***ekāyana magga***. The basic derivation is simple: *eka* means ‘one’; *ayana* means “going”; and *magga* means “path.” But further interpretation is difficult for a number of reasons: the word *eka* is used in many different senses; the exact grammatical relationship between *eka* and *ayana* is not clear; and idiomatic uses of the phrase are few and/or obscure.

<sup>103</sup> *Ekāyano maggo*, lit “one-going path”; alt tr, “the direct one-way path to samadhi.” See Introd (3.1-2).

<sup>104</sup> Nāṇavīra 1987:371.

<sup>105</sup> Brahmavamsa 2002:13.

<sup>106</sup> This term, however, should not be confused with *eka,yāna* (“one vehicle”) found in the Lotus Sutra and other Buddhist Sanskrit works.

<sup>107</sup> Also called the “fourfold exposition” (*catu-p, padāṃ veyyakaraṇaṃ*); see **Kiṭagiri S** (M 70.25) = SD 12.1 Introd (6a).

The commentators offer many different interpretations, which I will not repeat here, since they have been treated often enough before.<sup>108</sup> The commentators are concerned to expand the meaning, which is fine—especially when used, as often appears to be the intention, as raw material for oral instructions—but it is not very useful for we who wish to pin down the original denotation as precisely as possible.

An unfortunate result of such vagueness is that terms can be usurped for polemic purposes. Standard renderings of *ekāyana* as “the one and only way” tell us more about the biases of the translators than about the meaning of the Pali. The Chinese renderings merely confirm that they were likewise uncertain: the Sarvāstivāda **Smṛty-upasthana Sūtra** has “there is one path” (有一道 yòu yī dào), SĀ has “one vehicle path” (一乘道 yī chéng dào = *eka* + *yāna*, evidently the translator used this more familiar Mahayana term); SĀ<sup>2</sup> 102 has “there is only one path” (唯有一道 wéi yóu yī dào); while the Mahāsaṅghika **Ekāyana Sūtra** has “there is one entrance path” (有一入道 yòu yī rù dào = *eka* + *āyatana*).

Gethin includes an interesting discussion.<sup>109</sup> He cautions against any attempt to settle on a single concrete definition for such a term, which early on seemed to carry spiritual/mystical connotations, and is used in a variety of senses in the Brahmanical scriptures. The Chandogya Upanishad lists the “Ekāyana” as an ancient Brahmanical text, which according to the commentator dealt with *niti, śāstra*, “social ethics” or “politics”; perhaps the idea here is that social policy leads to a unified society. Gethin notes that the non-Buddhist contexts for *ekāyana* suggest two groups of meanings: the “lonely” or “solo” way; and a way that leads to one, a convergence point. “Solo way” is accepted by the commentators, but one could question whether this was a suitable interpretation, in the light of several texts in the Saṃyutta that encourage one to develop satipaṭṭhāna also for the benefit of others. Further, this meaning always seems to occur in literal contexts, not with a derived significance appropriate for meditation. Moreover, only the second meaning, which also claims commentarial support, is explicitly found elsewhere in the early Nikāyas.

(Sujato 2004b:122 f; diacritics normalized, with emphases & pinyin added)

The misinterpretation of this expression clearly reflects a religious triumphalism—that it refers to a certain type of meditation—a zealotry comparable perhaps to that of theistic fundamentalism.<sup>110</sup>

It is important to note that **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22/2:290-315) defines right mindfulness as the four focusses of mindfulness.<sup>111</sup> Read this alongside references like Dh 372-373, it is clear that the “only way” is not any type of meditation but nothing less than *the noble eightfold path* itself.

**The noble eightfold path**<sup>112</sup> is here summarized in connection with satipaṭṭhāna:

### III. Wisdom (*paññā*)

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| (1) right view    | the knowledge (understanding) of the four noble truths;      |
| (2) right thought | the thought of renunciation, of non-malice, of harmlessness; |

### I. Moral virtue (*sīla*)

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| (3) right speech     | refraining from lying, from slander, from harsh speech, from idle chatter;          |
| (4) right action     | refraining from taking life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct;                 |
| (5) right livelihood | refraining from that which harms oneself, others or the environment; <sup>113</sup> |

### II. Mental concentration (*samādhi*)

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| (6) right effort | the effort to prevent and to abandon unwholesome mental states, and the effort to rousing and to maintaining wholesome mental states; |
|------------------|---|

<sup>108</sup> Eg M:ÑB 1188 n135, Gethin 2001:60.

<sup>109</sup> Gethin 2001:59-66.

<sup>110</sup> See §2 n on “the ‘one’ path.” See S:B 1915 n123.

<sup>111</sup> D 22.21(vii)/2:313.

<sup>112</sup> For a detailed definition each of the 8 limbs of the eightfold path, see **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.21/2:311-313) = SD 13.2 & **Mahā Cattārisaka S** (M 117/3:71-78) = SD 6.10. See also Gethin 2001:190-226 (ch 6) for an insightful study.

<sup>113</sup> **Right livelihood**. See nn below at 13.2.21(v) (**Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S**, D 2:312).

- (7) right mindfulness **the practice of the four satipatthanas;**  
 (8) right concentration **the experience of the four dhyanas.**

**3.3 “GAINING THE RIGHT WAY.”** The two Pali *Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas* and the two Chinese versions<sup>114</sup> begin with the Buddha proclaiming that *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation constitutes the “one going path” for the purification of beings and the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation. **Analayo** observes:

While the two Pali versions speak moreover of “attaining the (true) method” as another benefit of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, the *Madhyama āgama* version speaks of “attaining the right *dhmma*” and the *Ekottara āgama* discourse of “attaining great knowledge and wisdom.”<sup>115</sup> According to the commentarial explanation, “method” in the present context represents the noble eightfold path.<sup>116</sup> This suggests that the different formulations found in the Pali and Chinese versions of this particular benefit may not have too different implications. (2005:1)

According to the commentary on **the Pañca Bhera, bhayā Sutta** (S 12.41),<sup>117</sup> *ñāya* (“method”) is both dependent arising and one’s stable knowledge after one has understood dependent arising. As he says, “It is dependent arising that is called the method; the method is also the noble eightfold path” (untraced) (SA 2:73). According to the *Porāṇa Tīkā* (Ancient Sub-commentary),<sup>118</sup> dependent arising is called “the method” because, with the application of the right means, it is what is known (*ñāyati*) as it actually is in the dependently arisen. But knowledge (*ñāṇa*) is called “the method” because it is “by this” (*etena*) (method) that the latter is known.<sup>119</sup>

The statement on the “one-going path” is followed, in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas*, by the statement that this is “for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of physical pain and mental pain, for gaining the right way, for the realization of nirvana” [2]. Most of this is straightforward enough, but the phrase “**for gaining the right way**” (*ñāyassa adhigamāya*) is vague, in English as well as in Pali. The term *ñāya* is sometimes used in the context of dependent arising, and some, like **Sujato**, have seen this as the meaning here:

This is not unreasonable, for there are clear connections between *satipatthana* and dependent origination.<sup>120</sup> However there is no very strong reason for thinking that this is the primary intended meaning. The most common, standard occurrence of the term is in the formula for recollection of the Sangha: “The Sangha of the Blessed One’s disciples has practiced well, practiced directly, practiced according to the way (*ñāya*), practiced properly.” Here we are in the realm of practice, and this, rather than dependent origination, would seem a more straightforward approach to seek the meaning of *ñāya* in *satipatthana*. This accords with the tradition, for the commentaries gloss *ñāya* in such contexts as “the noble eightfold path.”

There are a whole series of texts that use the word *ñāya* in the context of practice, which do not mention dependent origination, or for that matter *satipatthana*, even though some of them use the very same pericope of “for the purification of beings...”<sup>121</sup> These passages generally deal with the overall way of training, and all specifically include *samadhi*. The most explicit context is in **the Sandaka Sutta** of the *Majjhima* [M 76]. First the gradual training is taught, from the appearance of the Tathagata to the abandoning of hindrances; up to this stage the term *ñāya* is not used. (Sujato, 2004b:127 f)

<sup>114</sup> D 22; M 10; MĀ 98; EĀ 12.1.

<sup>115</sup> D 22/2:290,10 and M 10/1:56,2: *ñāyassa adhigamāya*; MĀ 98 = T1.582b10: 得正法; EĀ12.1=T2.568a3: 得大智慧.

<sup>116</sup> MA 1:236.

<sup>117</sup> S 12.41.15/2:69 = SD 3.3.4(2).

<sup>118</sup> SAPT:Be 2:84 (CSCD).

<sup>119</sup> Bodhi however notes, “Despite the commentators, *ñāya* has no relation to *ñāṇa* but is derived from *ni* + *I* (S:B 762 n122).

<sup>120</sup> The relation between *satipatthana* and dependent origination is implicit in **Samudaya S** [discussed by Sujato, 2005:139-142], and made explicit in **Sāriputrābhidharma** [2005:156-161]. [Sujato’s fn]

<sup>121</sup> A 3.75/EĀ 21.4; A 4.35; A 4.194/SĀ 565; A 6.26/SĀ 550; A 6.30/T1536.16; A 9.37/SĀ 557.

The Sandaka Sutta continues:

Having abandoned these five hindrances, defilements of the mind that weaken understanding, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskilful qualities, he enters and abides in the first jhana, which has initial & sustained application, with rapture & bliss born of seclusion.

An intelligent person would certainly live the holy life with a teacher under whom a disciple attains such an exalted distinction, and while living it he would attain the way (*ñāya*), the Dhamma that is skilful. (M 76.43/1:521 f; SĀ 973\*; SĀ<sup>2</sup> 207\*; Sujato's tr)

The text then goes on with the rest of the dhyanas and the higher knowledges (*abhiññā*) culminating in arhathood, repeating the concluding sentence (refrain) each time. The association of *ñāya* with *kusala*, the "skilful" or "wholesome," is also relevant in the context of *satipaṭṭhāna*, for in one place *satipaṭṭhāna*, in the context of developing samadhi, is said to be "for achieving the wholesome" (*kusalassādhigamāya*), just as it is said to be "for achieving the way" (*ñāyassa adhiḡamāya*).<sup>122</sup>

Thus, while the term *ñāya* may not be pinned down very neatly to a specific doctrinal denotation, it is clearly associated with the progressive scheme of the way of practice in general, and samadhi or jhana in particular. (Sujato 2004b: 128)

## II. THE BASIC SATIPATTHANA FORMULA

The basic satipaṭṭhana formula or "basic satipaṭṭhana formula"<sup>123</sup> or "auxiliary formula,"<sup>124</sup> or simply, "basic formula," is as follows:

**Here, monk, a monk dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, contemplating the body in the body,...  
contemplating feelings in the feelings,...  
contemplating the mind in the mind,...  
contemplating dharmas in the dharmas, putting away covetousness and displeasure in the world.** [cf 3.6]<sup>125</sup>

*Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī...vedanāsu vedanā'nupassī...citte cittānupassī...dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā,domanassam.* (D 22.1c/2:290 = M 10.3/1:55)

**3.4 "THE BODY IN THE BODY" (D 22.1c(A) = M 10.3(A)).** The basic instructions of the four focusses is that the practitioner should be one who observes "the body in the body" (*kāye kāyānupassī*), "feelings in the feelings" (*vedanāsu vedanā'nupassī*), "the mind in the mind" (*citte cittānupassī*) and "dharmas in the dharmas" (*dhamme dhammānupassī*). The Majjhima Commentary explains that such a repetition has the purpose of precisely determining the object of contemplation and of isolating that object from others with which it might be confused (MA 1:241 f). In each case, the object should be observed simply as a body, and not as a man, a woman, a self or a living being. That is to say, they are not to be seen as "This is mine" (*etam mama*) (which arises through craving, *taṇhā*), or as "This I am" (*eso 'ham asmi*) (due to conceit, *māna*), or as "This is my self" (*eso me attā*) (due to wrong view, *diṭṭhi*).<sup>126</sup> These three are also known as "latent tendencies to 'I'-making, 'mine'-

<sup>122</sup> D 18.28/DĀ 4 = T 9.

<sup>123</sup> This is Gethin's term, 2001:45-53, 53-59 & passim. The insight refrain will be discussed below [3.6].

<sup>124</sup> This is Sujato's term, 2004:113.

<sup>125</sup> The insight refrain apparently originated from (Satipaṭṭhāna) Vibhaṅga S (S 47.50) = SD 12.11. See SD 3.3ABCD & also Gethin 2001:47-53; Analayo 2003:24-91. The key terms of these 4 satipaṭṭhanas are discussed in greater detail below [4] and the satipaṭṭhānas are studied *comparatively* [5].

<sup>126</sup> Anattā,lakkhaṇa S, S 3:68 = SD 1.3.



making and conceit” (*ahaṇi, kāra, mamaṇi, kāra, mānāmusaya*).<sup>127</sup> They are called **the three obsessions** (*gāha*) and are the main factors behind conception (M 1) and mental proliferation (M 18). In short, such satipatthana experiences are not “beliefs” but direct experiences of reality.<sup>128</sup>

“Contemplating the body in the body” (*kāye kāyānupassī*) can be alternately translated as “one who watches the body as the body” but this has narrower sense. “**Body**” (*kāya*) here has two senses: (a) the breath is a “body” because it is a physical process; (b) it is a “body,” that is, a dynamic process that goes through the cycle of arising, stabilizing, passing away. Furthermore, **form** as the “great elements” (*mahā, bhūta*) comprises 25 kinds of **derived forms** (*upādā, rūpa*), namely,<sup>129</sup>

the five sense faculties (*pasāda, rūpa*): seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, body; the four sense objects: form, sound, smell, taste (touch being identical with three of the great elements, viz earth, fire and air);  
 femininity (*itth’indriya*);  
 masculinity (*puris’indriya*);  
 physical base of the mind (*hadaya, vatthu*);<sup>130</sup>  
 bodily intimation (*kāya, viññatti*),  
 verbal intimation (*vacī, viññatti*);  
 physical life (*rūpa, jīvītā*);  
 the space element (*ākāsa, dhātu*),  
 physical agility (*rupassa lahutā*),  
 physical elasticity (*rūpassa mudutā*),  
 physical adaptability (*rūpassa kammaññatā*),  
 physical growth (*rūpassa upacaya*);  
 physical continuity (*rūpassa santati*); and  
 food (*āhāra*).

These 25 kinds of form are called **the physical body** (*rūpa, kāya*) in contrast to the mental body (*nāma, kāya*). Of these, the breathing process is “a certain body” because it is included in tangible object (“touch”) base (*phoṭṭabb’āyatana*).

For this reason, it is said that one observes the body of air (*vāyo, kāya*), that is, motion or pressure, among the four bodies (the four great elements), or one sees breath as a body among the 25 kinds of form which are the physical body (*rūpa, kāya*). Therefore, one observes and sees body in the body.<sup>131</sup> The Dīgha Commentary (on the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta) explains why “body” is mentioned twice here: “For determining the object and isolating it,” which **Ñāṇamoli** paraphrases as “This means not confusing, during meditation, body with feeling, mind, etc. The body is observed just as body, feelings just as feelings, etc.”<sup>132</sup> There are those who think that it is merely idiomatic, with no particular significance, but **Sujato** notes,

surely such repetition must at the very least signify emphasis. The normative explanation in recent times, based on the Theravadin tradition, is that the repetition delineates and defines the object, in particular excluding taking the body (etc) to be something that it is not, ie a self. This explanation of course appears in a context that takes it for granted that satipatthana is primarily

<sup>127</sup> M 22.15, 72.15, 112.11 20, S 2:75, 3:236, 4:41, A 1:132, 133.

<sup>128</sup> See Bodhi, 1980:8-11; Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f.

<sup>129</sup> See (**Upādāna**) **Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56.7/3:59) = SD 3.7 n.

<sup>130</sup> *Hadaya, vatthu*, lit “the heart as physical basis” of the mind. This is a late concept. BDict (sv): “The heart according to the commentaries, as well as to the general Buddhist tradition, forms the physical base (*vatthu*) of consciousness. In the canonical texts, however, even in the Abhidhamma-Piṭaka, no such base is ever localized, a fact which seems to have first been discovered by Shwe Zan Oung (*Compendium of Philosophy*, p277 ff). In the Paṭṭhāna, we find repeatedly only the passage: ‘That material thing based on which mind-element and mind-consciousness element function’ (*yaṃ rūpaṃ nissāya mano, dhātu ca mano, viññāṇa, dhātu ca vattanti, taṃ rūpaṃ*).”

<sup>131</sup> Based on notes in email from Nina van Gorkom. See S:B 1916 n124.

<sup>132</sup> M:ÑB 2001 n138 on **Satipaṭṭhāna S**.

vipassana. However, it might be reinterpreted to suit a samatha context as well—not straying outside the bounds of the given meditation.

But none of these interpretations enjoy direct support from the Suttas. To find this, we must turn to a somewhat cryptic passage found in **the Ānāpānasati Sutta**, and in slightly different form in the Saṃyutta. This gives a unique set of phrases qualifying each of the four objects of satipaṭṭhana in the context of breath meditation. They are as follows:

[1] (Body) ‘I call this **a certain body (among the bodies)**, Ānanda, that is, breathing in & breathing out...<sup>133</sup>

[2] (Feelings) ‘I call this **a certain feeling (among the feelings)**, Ananda, that is, close attention to breathing in & breathing out...<sup>134</sup>

[3] (Mind) ‘I say, Ānanda, that there is no development of samadhi by breathing in & breathing out by one who is muddled and who lacks **clear comprehension [clear awareness]**...’

[4] (Dhammas) ‘Having seen with understanding the abandoning of covetousness & aversion, he watches over closely with **equanimity**...<sup>135</sup>

All these raise interpretive issues. It is not good practice to rely on such problematic passages, but in the absence of other relevant passages, it seems we have no choice. The sections on feelings and mind are obscure, and I will not discuss them here. The dhammas section is interesting, but I will defer a discussion until we consider ānāpānasati in general.<sup>136</sup>

The first saying, **dealing with the body**, is quite straightforward. Evidently, the “breath” is considered as a kind of “body,” or we might say in English, a kind of physical phenomenon, an aspect of the body. The bracketed portions appear in the Majjhima version only, not the Saṃyutta; comparison with the existing Chinese and Sanskrit versions might help clarify which is original. However, they do not substantially alter the meaning.

The meditator is to select this sphere within the entire field of physical experience as the focus of awareness. This is entirely in keeping with the thesis that satipaṭṭhana is primarily a samatha practice. This interpretation is also in clear accord with the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas. The descriptions of all the practices in all versions speak of a series of contemplations of discrete aspects of the given topic. For example, one contemplates pleasant feeling, then painful feeling, then neutral feeling, and so on. This is a strong confirmation that we are on the right track: the primary implication of the repetitive idiom in the satipaṭṭhana formula is to narrow the focus of attention within each of the four objects of satipaṭṭhana. (Sujato 2004b:117)<sup>137</sup>

The second part of the *satipaṭṭhāna* formula has to do with contemplation (*anupassanā*) [3.5]. Then, we shall examine the third part, on clear awareness (*sampajañña*) [3.6], and finally, on “internal and external” (*ajjhatta, bahiddhā*) [3.7]. But first let us study Sujato’s comments on “contemplation.”

**3.5 ANUPASSANĀ (D 22.1c(A) = M 10.3(A)).** The practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*, that is, focussing oneself with mindfulness is called “observing” (or, as Sujato renders it, “contemplation”) (*anupassanā*), and the practitioner is called “one who observes” (*anupassī*)—as in “who observes the body in the body” (*kāyānupassī*), etc—throughout the sutta [3, passim]. **Sujato** explains the derivation of *anupassanā* thus:

The prefix *anu-* suggests “following, conforming, after,” and lacks the analytical implication of *vi-*. It could be interpreted here as implying a mode of contemplation that “conforms” to the relevant context; thus *anupassanā* is normally the second member of a compound where the first member defines the specific subject of meditation: “contemplation of....”

<sup>133</sup> M 10.25(A)(4) = SD 7.13.

<sup>134</sup> M 10.25(B)(8) = SD 7.13.

<sup>135</sup> S 54.10/SA 813; S 54.13/SĀ 810; M 118.23 ff.

<sup>136</sup> See §5D (Dhammānupassanā) below.

<sup>137</sup> See also 2004b:87 (ch 9).

In psychological contexts[,] *anu-* commonly carries the nuance of “continuing.” Thus *vitakketi* means “to think”; *anuvitakketi* means “to keep on thinking.”

The same usage occurs in the definition of *sati* as “memory” that we have encountered above. There two terms are used: *sara* and *anussara*, which we should understand as “remembers, keeps in memory.”

A similar nuance is evident in two of the terms used in the Abhidhamma gloss for the jhana factor *vicāra*—*anusandhanatā* and *anupekkhanatā*—which should be translated “sustained application, sustained observation.”

*Anupassanā* is semantically cognate with *anupekkhanatā*, and so also suggests “sustained observation.” This sustained, continuous aspect of *anupassanā* is clearly emphasized in the verses we examined above. The commentary on the Visuddhimagga comments on this word in just this way: “he keeps re-seeing (*anu anu passati*) with jhana knowledge and insight knowledge.”<sup>138</sup> (Sujato 2004:119 f)

Sujato<sup>139</sup> goes on to make this important observation:

The second crucial part of the satipaṭṭhāna formula, then, is the term *anupassanā*. In the Abhidhamma this is glossed with the standard register of terms for understanding, which is not wrong but is not very helpful, as it ignores the subtleties of context. This may be one reason why later writers have tended to equate *anupassanā* with vipassana, or with non-judgemental awareness; however a closer examination suggests that this does not do either term justice. We may start with a verse from the Rig Veda.

He **contemplates** with loving favor the mortal who, like a rich man, pours for him the Soma. Maghavan [ie Indra, ruler of Gods] in his bended arm supports him: he slays, unasked, the men who hate devotion.<sup>140</sup>

Here *anupassanā* obviously refers to a strongly one-sided regard, the very opposite of “non-judgemental.” A very similar usage is found in the early Buddhist texts, too. The first of the following verses is from the Sutta Nipāta, the second from the Dhammapada.

He is no friend who is ever diligently  
Suspecting dissension, **contemplating** only flaws;  
But on whom one rests, like a child at the breast,  
He is a true friend, who is not alienated by others. (Sn 255)

For one who **contemplates** the faults of another,  
Whose thoughts are always critical;  
His defilements increase –  
He is far from the evaporation of defilements. (Dh 253) (Sujato 2004b:118)

The similarity of subject and treatment is striking, notes Sujato. The texts strongly emphasize that “observing” (*anupassanā*) here means seeing only (eva) one side of a situation. Moreover, it means seeing that one side not occasionally but constantly (sadā, niccam). The use of ‘diligence’ (*appamāda*) in a negative sense is very unusual; normally, of course, diligence is closely connected with mindfulness.

The Īśa Upanishad shows a friendlier face of *anupassanā*:

He who **contemplates** all beings just as the self  
And the self as all beings; he is not revulsed because of that.  
When all beings are just the self for the discerning one

<sup>138</sup> Vism:Ñ 68 n47.

<sup>139</sup> The rest of this section is based mainly on Sujato’s *A History of Mindfulness*, 2004b:117-120.

<sup>140</sup> Rg Veda 10.160.4.

Then what delusion, what sorrow, for one who **contemplates** oneness?<sup>141</sup>

This could easily be interpreted in Buddhist context as the normal Buddhist practice of universal loving-kindness. In Upanishadic context, of course, we may assume that the more pregnant metaphysical sense of “self” is intended. Here *anupassanā* evidently refers to a mode of contemplation that sees two sides of things—all beings as the self, the self as all beings—and resolves this surface duality into a deeper unity.

The word ‘**oneness**’ (*ekatva*) here may be compared with the occurrence of “one” in the classic description of satipatthana as the “path going to one” (*ekāyana magga*). The “two-into-one” movement finds its Buddhist counterpart in **the Dvayatānupassanā Sutta** of the Sutta Nipāta.<sup>142</sup> This text, the longest and most doctrinally substantial text in the Sutta Nipāta, presents a series of “contemplations” arranged in pairs. Many of these correspond with factors of dependent origination. (Sujato 2004b:118)

**Sujato** then quotes this typical example:

“This is suffering, this is the origin of suffering”—this is one **contemplation**.

“This is the cessation of suffering, this is the way of practice leading to the end of suffering”—this is a second **contemplation**.

Bhikshus, for a monk, rightly **contemplating** this pair, abiding diligent, ardent, and resolute, one of two fruits may be expected: profound knowledge in this very life, or, if there is a remnant, non-return.’ (Sn p140)

Here, just as in the Īśa Upanishad, two contrasting contemplations are recommended. But the contrast is, of course, says Sujato, really a complement, so the full realization of these two contemplations leads to one goal (although in the Dvayatānupassanā this is complicated by the offer of non-return as an alternative to full awakening). So although the contexts are quite different, the role of *anupassanā* remains similar.

Sujato then quotes the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad which “makes the metaphysical usage of *anupassanā* explicit.”

The one controller of the many, inactive, who makes the one seed manifold  
Standing in the self—the wise who **contemplate** him, to them belongs eternal bliss, not to others.<sup>143</sup>

Here, too, notes Sujato, the connection between *anupassanā* and the “one” is prominent. The wise are to observe the one, inactive source, not the multiplicity of appearance; only this leads to happiness. The earlier Brhad-āraṇyaka also uses *anupassanā* as a contemplation, a beholding, of the divine.

If one clearly **contemplates** him as the self, as God,  
As the Lord of what has become and what will be, one does not shrink away from him.<sup>144</sup>

The following verses from the Dhammapada may be considered as a crossover between the early, non-technical usage of *anupassanā* and the more specialized sense in *satipaṭṭhāna*.

One who abides **contemplating** beauty,  
Unrestrained in his sense faculties,  
Immoderate in eating,  
Lazy, with deficient energy;  
Truly Māra overthrows him  
As the wind, a weak tree.

<sup>141</sup> Īśa Upanishad 6-7.

<sup>142</sup> Sn p140-150/no 38 = vv724-765, ie the 12<sup>th</sup> sutta of ch 3 (Mahā Vagga).

<sup>143</sup> Śvetāśvatara Upanishad 12.

<sup>144</sup> BU 4.4.15.

One who abides **contemplating** ugliness [impurities],  
 Restrained in his sense faculties,  
 Moderate in eating,  
 Faithful, with roused-up energy;  
 Truly Māra does not overthrow him  
 As the wind, a rocky mountain. (Dh 7-8; Sujato's tr)

Here one is depicted as contemplating either beauty or ugliness (*subha*, *asubha*); again, one is focusing on just one aspect of things, deliberately ignoring the other side.

*Anupassanā* in such contexts is clearly oriented towards eliminating sensual lust, and hence falls primarily on the side of samatha. *Anupassanā* does occur occasionally in vipassana contexts, too. For example, there are a few discourses in the Khandha-saṃyutta that speak of “contemplation” of impermanence, suffering, and not-self.<sup>145</sup> Elsewhere we read of “contemplation of impermanence,” etc, especially regarding feelings.<sup>146</sup> The proper role of “contemplation of impermanence” in satipatthana is in the fourth satipatthana, as is clear from *ānāpānasati*.

So *anupassanā* may be used in both samatha and vipassana contexts, and cannot be exclusively categorized as either. Although related to the word “vipassana,” *anupassanā* is not used when standing alone, as vipassana is, to specifically denote the meditative enquiry into impermanence and causality. (Sujato 2004b:119 f)

### 3.6 SAMPAJĀNA (D 22.4 = M 10.8)

**3.6a Definition.** The definition of the four focusses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) [3.1b] opens with the “**basic satipatthana formula**”<sup>147</sup> or “auxiliary formula”<sup>148</sup> [3.0] of the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas [10]:

Here, bhikkhus, a monk, . . . dwells exertive [ardent], clearly aware, mindful, . . . putting away covetousness and displeasure for the world.

The **Netti-p, pakarāṇa**<sup>149</sup> attempts to interpret the key terms here to correspond with four of the five spiritual faculties (*pañc'indriya*), that is, to say:<sup>150</sup>

effort [energy]	=	“exertive”;
wisdom	=	“clearly aware”;
mindfulness	=	“mindful”;
samadhi	=	“putting away covetousness and displeasure for the world.” <sup>151</sup>

“However,” notes **Sujato**, in *A History of Mindfulness*,

the correlation with the spiritual faculties is not particularly close. For example, the spiritual faculty of understanding (*paññā*) is defined as “the understanding of rise and fall that is noble and penetrative, leading to the full ending of suffering,”<sup>152</sup> clear knowledge (*sampajañña*), although etymologically parallel to “understanding” is never used in this exalted sense, but is usually restricted to the more mundane sense of “awareness of activities in daily life.”

(Sujato 2004b:114)

<sup>145</sup> S 22.39-42/SĀ 27; S 22.147/SĀ48.

<sup>146</sup> S 36.7/SĀ 1028, S 36.8/SĀ 1029, M 37/SĀ 505/EĀ 19.3.

<sup>147</sup> This term is used by Gethin, 2001:53-59 & passim.

<sup>148</sup> This term is used by Sujato, *A History of Mindfulness*, 2004b:113.

<sup>149</sup> Nett 4.23.

<sup>150</sup> The first spiritual faculty (*indriya*), **faith** (*saddhā*), has been omitted, since “it is clearly a prerequisite for taking up the practice in the first place” (Bodhi S:B 1916 n124). On the 5 spiritual faculties, see **Āpaṇa S** (S 48.50) = SD 10.4.

<sup>151</sup> Covetousness and displeasure are synecdoche for the 5 mental hindrances [4.2e], the removal of the hindrances implies some level of mental concentration. See §4.2.

<sup>152</sup> S 48.9/SĀ 647.

The adjective *sampajāna* (n *sampajañña*) is resolved as

*sañ*, a prefix showing connection, meaning “together,” as in *samyutta*, “yoked together” (connected); or connoting “self,” ie self-effort, as in *sānyama*, “self-restraint.” *Sambodhi* can mean “self-awakening” or “full awakening”; *sammā,sambodhi*, “full self-awakening.” In *sampajāna*, *pa* serves to connote “focus of attention”;

*pa*, a prefix of direction, meaning “forth, forward, out,” or of intensity, meaning “up, out, about, entirely” (as in *pacinati*, “he heaps up”; *panāda*, “shouting out”; *pakiṇṇaka*, “scattered about” (meaning “miscellaneous”); *padūseti*, “he ruins entirely”; *pajānāti*, “he knows entirely”; *paññā*, “knowing entirely” (meaning “wisdom”). (See PED.)

*jāna* (adj) [from √jñā, to know]: *jānāti*, “he knows”: the noun from this is *ñāṇa* (Skt *jñāna*, “gnosis, knowledge”).

As such, *sampajāna* is “a bringing together (of the mind) by self-effort to entirely know something” or more simply, “clearly aware,” “very well knowing,” “fully aware,” “fully knowing.”<sup>153</sup> The moral tone of *sampajāna* clearly depends on the context; for example, the expression *sampajāna.-musāvāda* means “a deliberate lie.”<sup>154</sup> The Commentaries explain that clear awareness (*sampajañña*) has four applications:

- (1) as clear awareness of one’s purpose (*sāthaka,sampajañña*);
- (2) as clear awareness of the suitability of the means for one’s purpose (*sappāya,sampajañña*);
- (3) as clear awareness of the resort (ie keeping one’s focus on the right task) (*gocara,sampajañña*); and
- (4) as clear awareness by way of discerning things in their true nature, free from delusion (*asammoha,sampajañña*) (DA 1:183; MA 1:184, 253 f; SA 3:182; VbhA 347)

**Sujato** points out that there are two levels of clear awareness (here, rendered as “clear comprehension”):

... we must distinguish between two levels of mindfulness in the account of the gradual training: the preliminary stage of “mindfulness in daily life,” usually called “clear comprehension,” and, when the yogi sits down in the forest to meditate, the undertaking of satipatthana proper. Clear comprehension, like other practices such as sense restraint, wakefulness, etc, involves mindfulness in its role of preparing for meditation.

But because in the gradual training clear comprehension comes close before the “establishing of mindfulness” in meditation, it would quite naturally become subsumed under satipatthana as that practice grew in scope and importance. (Sujato 2004b:111)

The term *sampajañña*, which occurs in some of the satipatthana formulas and commonly elsewhere together with mindfulness, is also glossed by the Abhidhamma with the standard register of synonyms for wisdom, and has been equated by some writers with vipassana. But although *sampajañña* is etymologically equivalent to *paññā*, “understanding,” it is not explicitly equated with vipassana. It is indeed used occasionally in the sense of vipassana; we will examine this in the context of the Satipatthana Samyutta below.<sup>155</sup>

But *sampajañña* is most characteristically used in the context of “daily life awareness” as a preparation for jhana. Both the Suttas and the Abhidhamma include this practice under *samadhi*. In **the Subha Sutta**,<sup>156</sup> it is listed under the “aggregate of samadhi”; and in the Abhidhamma it finds its place in **the Jhāna Vibhaṅga**. Nowhere in the Suttas or Abhidhamma is the awareness of activities treated primarily as vipassana.

<sup>153</sup> D 1:37, 2:94 f, 3:49, 58, 221, 224 f; A 4:47 f, 300 f, 457 f; Sn 413, 931; It 10, 42; Nm 395; Nc 141; Pug 25.

<sup>154</sup> V 4:2; D 3:45; A 1:128, 4:370, 5:265; It 18; J 1:23.

<sup>155</sup> See “Clear comprehension: The contemplation on mind objects,” in *A History of Mindfulness* 2004b:138.

<sup>156</sup> D 10.2.3/1:209; DA<sup>2</sup> 42. Sujato notes here that “Walshe’s tr here is faulty. He has: ‘This comes to him through concentration.’ It should read: ‘This is, for him, what pertains to concentration.’” The first mention of *sampajañña* in Dīgha, however, is in **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.65/1:70 f).

The other common usage of *sampajañña* is in the formula for the third jhana, where it expresses the wisdom dimension of samadhi. Most of the exercises of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta use the verb form of *paññā* in a similar sense, for example: “One understands, ‘I am breathing in a long breath’ ... One understands, ‘I am standing’ ... One understands ‘I am experiencing a pleasant feeling’ ...” and so on. So there is clearly this dimension of understanding in the sense of clear awareness throughout the meditation. We find that jhanas too can be qualified by such terms; sometimes jhana is classified under wisdom, or one in jhana is said to “know & see,” and so on.

The mere usage of these terms cannot mean that this is a vipassana practice as distinguished from a samatha practice. Reality is more subtle: all meditation must include both peace and wisdom. The question is: what is the context, how are these qualities being applied here? The contexts we have seen above suggest that the primary purpose of satipaṭṭhana is the development of samadhi, and there is nothing here to change that conclusion. All we can rightly conclude is that the development of jhana involves a dimension of wisdom.

(Sujato 2004b:120 = 2005:166 f)

**3.6b Mindfulness when sleeping.** The “clear awareness” section [§iii] of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta has this instruction: “While... asleep, when awake (*sutte jāgarite*)... he is clearly aware, s what he is doing” [§4(7)]. The Majjhima Commentary glosses *sutte* as *sayane*, “lying down, sleeping.”<sup>157</sup> *Sutte* is often erroneously rendered as “falling asleep,” which is *niddaṃ okkamati*. Similarly, *jāgarite* refers to the state of being awake, not to “waking or rising from sleep” (*pabujjhati*).

The practice of mindfulness focussed on sleeping means one uses the old experience, now past, of having been asleep as the focus of superpower mindfulness **now**. It is mindfulness taking an old experience as its object. This may sound pedantic to you now, but it becomes crucially important, as you will see when I explain the focus of mindfulness on the *citta* (mind-consciousness).

(Brahmavamsa 2002:26, 32-34)

A good example of “clearly aware” when sleeping is mentioned in **the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), when it is said that the Buddha, on going to sleep, would make “a mental note of rising up (in due course).”<sup>158</sup>

**3.6c Sati, sampajañña.** The phrase *sampajāno satimā*, which is part of the definition of focusing of mindfulness [3ABCD], as such, is best rendered as “clearly aware and mindful.” In their nominal form, they are called *sati, sampajañña*, “mindfulness and clear awareness,” and often described as being “virtues of great assistance” (*bahu, kāra, dhammā*) (D 3:273; A 1:95), since they are vital for mental development.<sup>159</sup> **Sujato** notes:

The standard description of “observations of the positions of the body” does not include the word “mindfulness” in the description of the practice itself. The act is described, as above, by saying the monk “acts with clear comprehension” (*sampajānakārī hoti*). Accordingly the overall practice is called simply “clear comprehension” in the Saṃyutta.<sup>160</sup> It would seem, therefore, that it is, in the early Pali idiom, quite legitimate to describe the practice of being aware throughout one’s daily activities without even using the word “mindfulness.”

Only in the developed version of the gradual training, however, is the practice described as “mindfulness & clear comprehension.” On the other hand, the use of the word “mindfulness” in the case of the monk who sits down cross legged in the forest to meditate is absolutely standard, consistent, and intrinsic to the description of the practice. (Sujato 2004b:90)

Throughout his life, the Buddha practises mindfulness and clear awareness. **The Saḷāyatana Sutta** (M 137) relates how the Buddha, while teaching his disciples, maintains equanimity whether

<sup>157</sup> MA1:269; cf DA 1:202 f (ad **Sāmañña.phala S**).

<sup>158</sup> D 16.4.40/2:134 f.

<sup>159</sup> For Comy tr, see Soma 1998:83-132 & Bodhi, *Discourse on the Fruits of Recluseship*, 1989:96-134. See Nyanaponika 1962:46-57.

<sup>160</sup> S 36.7-8/4:210-214, 47.2/5:142.

they were attentive or not.<sup>161</sup> In the **Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36), the Buddha mentions how when resting, he would lie on his right side and sleep mindfully.<sup>162</sup> A number of suttas witness how even when the Buddha was sick, he would endure pain or illness with mindfulness and clear awareness, and similarly, and when giving up the life-principle, and when preparing to pass away.<sup>163</sup>

**The Pajjuna, dhītu Sutta 2** (S 1.40) and **the Sāpūga Sutta** (A 4.194) state that mindfulness and clear awareness conduce to the cultivation of moral virtue and overcoming sensual desire.<sup>164</sup> According to **Analayo**, in the context meditation, mindfulness and clear awareness can refer the observing of feelings and of thoughts, and “they can mark a high level of equanimity in the context of perceptual training; or they can take part in overcoming sloth-and-torpor” (2003:41 f). **The Nanda Sutta** (A 8.9), for example, deals with the observing of feelings and thoughts.<sup>165</sup> **The Sampasādanīya Sutta** (D 28) and **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33) speak of perceptual training,<sup>166</sup> and **the Sāmañña, phala Sutta** (D 2), of the overcoming of sloth and torpor.<sup>167</sup> Mindfulness and clear awareness are vital during the third dhyana, where they prevent the meditator from relapsing into the intense zest (*pīti*) of the second dhyana.<sup>168</sup>

These qualities of clear knowledge and mindfulness thus remind one of the development of “knowledge” and “vision” of reality (*yathābhūtañānadassana*). According to the Buddha, to both “know” and “see” are necessary conditions for the realization of Nibbāna.<sup>169</sup> It might not be too far-fetched to relate such growth of knowledge (*ñāna*) to the quality of clearly knowing (*sampajāna*), and the accompanying aspect of “vision” (*dassana*) to the activity of watching represented by mindfulness (*sati*). (Analayo 2003:42)

In short, clear awareness processes the input gathered by mindful observation, which then leads to the arising of wisdom.

### III. THE INSIGHT REFRAIN: THE UNITY OF PRACTICE

**3.7a Preamble.** Rupert Gethin, in *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, makes this preliminary note of the insight refrain (or expanded formula):

It seems reasonable to see the progression from watching body to watching *dhmma(s)* as intended to indicate a movement from clear awareness [*sampajañña*] of the more immediately accessible realms of experience to an awareness of what the Nikāyas see as subtler and deeper realms. Such a[n] hierarchical conception of the universe and consciousness alike is, of course, a consistent theme of the Upaniṣads and Buddhist literature,<sup>170</sup> and it seems that in the four

<sup>161</sup> M 137.23/3:221.

<sup>162</sup> M 36.46/1:249.

<sup>163</sup> When he was down with dysentery, **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16.2.23/2:99; 16.4.20/2:128) = SD 9, **Cunda S** (U 8.5/82); when he foot was cut by a stone splinter, **Sakalika S** (S 1.38/1:27, 4.13/1:110; cf V 2:184-203); when he gave up his life principle (D 16.3.10/2:106; S 51.10/5:262; A 8.70.9/4:311; U 6.1/64), when he was on entering parinirvana (D 5.2/2:137). The Buddha exhorts the monks to have mindfulness and clear awareness, **Gelañña S 1** (S 36.7/4:211) & **Sato S** (S 47.2/5:142).

<sup>164</sup> S 1.40/1:31 (v135); A 4.194/2:194-196.

<sup>165</sup> A 8.9.3/4:168.

<sup>166</sup> D 28.18/3:113; D 33.2.2(20)/3:250.

<sup>167</sup> D 2.65/1:71.

<sup>168</sup> Eg at **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.21/2:313); *Vism* 4.174/163; see Guenther 1974:124; Gunaratana 1985:92.

<sup>169</sup> S 3:152, 5:434.

<sup>170</sup> Cf Przyłuski & Lamotte 1932:148-154 where the Upaniṣad conception of the universe of three levels corresponding to the waking state, sleep accompanied by dreams and deep sleep is compared to the Buddhist notion of the three realms of *dhātus*. On the waking state (*jāgarita-sthāna*), dream state (*svapna-sthāna*) and deep sleep (*susupti*) in Vedānta, see K Werner, *Yoga and Indian Philosophy*, Delhi, 1977:68-70. (Gethin’s fn)



*satipaṭṭhānas* we have another expression of it. Certainly they appear to be understood in this kind of way in later writings.<sup>171</sup> (Gethin 2001:47)

Gethin goes on to point out that the Nikāyas to a significant extent discuss the notion of the four satipatthanas as a progressive refining of mindfulness, as in the “mindfulness concerned with the body” (*kāya,gatā sati*), quite apart from the explicit discussion of the first satipatthana [5A].

In these last four sections here [3.7-10], we shall analyse the key terms and ideas of **the insight refrain** or “vipassana refrain” or “expanded satipatthana formula.”<sup>172</sup> The insight refrain for the observing of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) runs a total of 16 times, thus:

**So he dwells contemplating the body in the body internally,  
or, contemplating the body in the body externally,  
or, contemplating the body in the body both internally and externally;  
or, he dwells contemplating states that arise in the body,  
or, he dwells contemplating states that fall away in the body,  
or, he dwells contemplating states that arise and fall away in the body.  
Or else, he maintains the mindfulness that “There is a body,” merely for knowing and awareness.**

**And he dwells independent, not clinging to anything in this world.**

**And that, bhikkhus, is how a monk dwells contemplating the body in the body.**

[3:5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 25, 31; mutatis mutandis at: 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 45]

*Iti ajjhataṃ vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati,  
bahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati,  
ajjhata,bahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati;  
samudaya,dhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati,  
vaya,dhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati,  
samudaya,vaya,dhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati.*

*Atthi kāyo ti vā pan'assa sati paccupaṭṭhitā hoti yāvad eva ñāṇa,mattāya  
patissati,mattāya.*

*Anissito ca viharati na ca kiñci loke upadīyati.*

*Evam pi bhikkhave bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati. (D 22.2e/2:292 = M 10.5/1:56 etc)*

The underlined words are changed mutatis mutandis (as appropriate) for the other three satipatthanas. We shall study the insight refrains in their four main parts:

- (1) Practising satipatthana internally, externally, and internally-externally; [3.7]
- (2) Watching the nature of arising, of ending, and of arising and ending; [3.8]
- (3) Maintaining the mindfulness of a “body” merely for knowing and awareness; [3.9] and
- (4) Dwelling independent and not clinging to the anything in this world. [3.10]

An interesting aspect of the satipatthana practice is that we are encouraged to practise it internally, externally, and both internally-externally. These practices are obviously important as they are attested in all the Nikāyas, Āgamas, and Abhidharmas, and obviously rank as of some importance.

The sequence of practice here is significant and has been noted by **Analayo**:

According to the instruction in the “refrain,” “internal” contemplation precedes its “external” counterpart. This indicates that the first step of internal contemplation serves as a basis of understanding similar phenomena in others during the second step, external contem-

<sup>171</sup> Eg Abhidharma,kośa 342 states that the order of their arising results from seeing what is gross (*audārika*) first.

<sup>172</sup> “The insight refrain.” This is Gethin’s term, 2001:45-53, 53-59 & passim. Analayo uses “**the satipatthana refrain**” here, 2003:92-116. However, I prefer using this term for the former, which I have as such called “the basic satipatthana formula” to avoid confusion.

plation. Indeed, to be aware of one's own feelings and reactions enables one to understand the feelings and reactions of others more easily. (2003:97)<sup>173</sup>

We shall continue this discussion under three convenient, but superficial, headings of “internally,” “externally” and “internally-externally,” each section of which highlights a definition of the heading. The discussion of these “directional” approaches to satipatthana, however, are clearly interconnected. As such the discussions will overlap these sections.

Suttas such as **the Bhikkhu Sutta** (S 47.3), teach that having established oneself well in moral virtue (that is, keeping the precepts well), “one should develop the four focusses of mindfulness in a threefold way,”<sup>174</sup> that is, internally, externally, and both. It is also clear that these three modes of attention for developing satipatthana should each be practised separately.

**3.7b “Internally.”** While the reflexive aspect of *satipaṭṭhāna* involves contemplating each focus of mindfulness “internally” (*ajjhatta*) within oneself, its vicarious aspect is contemplating “externally” (*bahiddhā*) in another person, or both “internally and externally” (*ajjhatta, bahiddhā*) in oneself and others in close succession, as taught in **the (Satipaṭṭhāna) Bhikkhu Sutta** (S 47.3/5:142-144).

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta formulation of contemplation includes the progression *ajjhatta/bahiddhā-ajjhatta, bahiddhā* for all four *satipaṭṭhānas*. This is not simply a mechanical process. **Gethin** explains that this repetition has

to do with the blurring of distinction between self and other—something which is, of course, entirely consistent with the notion of not-self in Buddhist thought. Thus as the *bhikkhu* watches body, feelings, mind and *dhammas* within, without, within and without, rather than seeing a world made up of distinct “persons” or “selves,” he becomes progressively aware of a world of *dhamma*, made up entirely of *dhammas* of all of which are “not-self.” (2001:54 f)

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the Sarvāstivāda **Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra** are slightly different from most other presentations. These suttas present the basic satipatthana refrain first, followed by the internal/external contemplation as part of the refrain following the detailed explanation. Usually, however,

the internal/external contemplation is integrated into the formula from the start: “One contemplates a body in the body internally....” We can call this the “**integrated internal/external formula**.” This is found in the Pali sources apart from the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta itself, such as the Saṃyutta, the Dīgha, and the Vibhaṅga; also in the Sarvāstivāda Saṃyukta,<sup>175</sup> Ekāyana Sūtra, Dharmaskandha, and Śāriputrābhīdharma; also fairly consistently in later sources such as the Avataṃsaka Sūtra, Abhidharmasamuccaya, and Arthaviniścaya Sūtra. Obviously there is no serious difference in the meaning, but such innocuous details are all the more useful in tracing textual affiliations and editorial fiddling. (Sujato 2004b:120)

<sup>173</sup> Mann 1992:112 speaks of realizing “that the forces at work within other people are the same as the forces that motivate our own behaviour.” Similarly, insights gained during external observing will in turn also support internal observing. For example, it is comparatively easy to uncover the underlying motives of particular reactions in someone else, while the same motives might pass undetected if one is the actor oneself. Nyanaponika 1962:58, who explains that “many things permit of better understanding when observed in others, or in external objects, than in oneself.” Cf also Bullen 1969:32; Khemacari 1985:23. (Analayo’s fn; normalized). See Analayo 2003:92-116 (ch 5), where he discusses these sequences in relation to dependent arising.

<sup>174</sup> *Cattāro satipaṭṭhāne tividhena bhāveyyāsi* (S 47.3.4/5:143). Similarly S 5:294, 297, and A 3:450 treat these three modes of attention as distinct observings. Several discourses (such as M 3:16; S 4:205; S 5:110) apply the distinction between the internal and the external individually to feelings, to the hindrances, to the awakening factors, and to the aggregates. “These passages suggest that the application of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ to all satipatthanas in the ‘refrain’ is not merely a case of meaningless repetition, but has to have some significance in each case.” (Analayo 2003:96 n11). See also Gethin 1994:54.

<sup>175</sup> SĀ 610, but not its cognate S 47.2. (Sujato’s fn)

Since meditation is the “inward path,” it is not difficult to envisage *satipaṭṭhāna* being practised “internally,” that is, within oneself, which after all, should be the main focus for mental cultivation. **The Iti,vuttaka**, for example, reminds us that:

For one well established in internal presence of *ānāpāna,sati*, there are no disturbing thoughts drifting outside.” (It 3.36)<sup>176</sup>

**3.7c “Externally.”** As mentioned in the preamble [3.7a], the “external” satipatthana exercise helps one understand both oneself and others better. The terms “internal” and “external,” however, are also found in the contexts of both “samatha” and “vipassana” meditation practices. **Sujato** is very helpful here, and is quoted here verbatim:

In general sutta usage, the terminology of internal and external is found both in the context of both samatha and vipassana. As a samatha example, take the eight liberations or the eight bases of transcendence.<sup>177</sup>

Perceiving form internally, one sees forms externally, limited, fair and ugly; by transcending them one perceives thus: “I know, I see.” This is the first base of transcendence.” (M 77.23)

While the phrasing is obscure, it is clear that such passages refer to the development of some visualization as an object of samadhi, such as is known in the later works as a *nimitta*. I think “perceiving form internally” refers to imagining a part of the body as the initial stage in developing a true *samadhi nimitta*. This would therefore come within the sphere of satipatthana.

As a vipassana example, we need look no further than the second sermon, **the Discourse on Not-Self**,<sup>178</sup> where the Buddha speaks of each of the five aggregates as “internal or external.” This passage is of course one of the fundamental vipassana pericopes.

In the specific context of satipatthana we find a passage in the Dīgha Nikāya: through “internal” contemplation one enters samadhi, then gives rise to knowledge & vision (ie psychic vision) of the body, etc, of others externally. (D 18.26)

Within **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta**, internal and external contemplation emerges most naturally in the charnel ground contemplations, which are depicted as imaginative exercises:

As if one would see a corpse discarded in a charnel ground, one, two, or three days dead, bloated, livid, and oozing matter, a monk compares this very body with it thus: “This body too is of that same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.”<sup>179</sup>

Mention should also be made of **the Vijaya Sutta** of the Sutta Nipāta. This little poem compresses most of the Suttas’ body contemplations into a few verses. Although it does not specifically mention satipatthana, it stands as the main teaching on body contemplation in the Sutta Nipāta, and might have been composed for that very reason. If so, it would not be very early. After describing some charnel ground meditations, it says:

As this is, so is that; as that is, so is this –  
Internally and externally, one should dispel desire for the body.<sup>180</sup>

The internal/external contemplation of the elements is treated in detail in **the Mahāhatthi-pāḍopama Sutta**.<sup>181</sup> For example, the internal water element is defined as the watery parts of

<sup>176</sup> This includes the unusual phrase “*ajjhataṃ parimukhaṃ*.” (Sujato’s fn)

<sup>177</sup> See **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16.3.33 = SD 9 n).

<sup>178</sup> **Anatta,lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59) = SD 1.2.

<sup>179</sup> Emphases added: “this very body” (*so imam eva kāyaṃ*). Notice the impersonal tone of the statement, reflecting the lack of ownership and not self, ie, the body is actually beyond one’s control. *Ayam pi kho kāyo evaṃ, dhammo evaṃ, bhāvī etaṃ anatīto ti*, “Such is the nature of this body: it will become like that—this is unavoidable.” (M 10.14, 16, 24, 30). This is an application of the “specific conditionality” (*idap-paccayatā*) = SD 5.16(2). See foll n.

<sup>180</sup> Sn 205. The first line is the “specific conditionality” (*idap-paccayatā*) formula.

one's own body, such as sweat and blood, etc, and the external water element is the waters in floods, the ocean, etc.

Both internal and external water element are merely water element, and should be seen rightly as not-self and impermanent. This passage might be taken as implying that the third stage, where internal and external are combined, should be seen as a synthesis where the difference between the inner and outer is surmounted.

Interestingly, the treatment of impermanence of the external water element, as too the other elements, speaks of the destruction of the earth at the end of the universe, which is most emphatically not a "momentary" conception of impermanence. This seems to extend the application of "external" not just to the "there" but also to the "then," outside in both space and time.

Similar notions are preserved in the Sarvāstivādin **Abhidharma**; we shall see below that while the Theravāda treats internal purely as "pertaining to oneself" and external as "pertaining to others," the Sarvāstivāda **Dharmaskandha** also refers to past and future lives.

This usage might ultimately derive from the Saṃyukta. We have seen above that one of the Sarvāstivāda **Saṃyukta** discourses adds an editorial gloss, blatantly inserted following the usual ending. This happens elsewhere, too. One such example occurs in a discourse called "**Development**."<sup>182</sup> In the Sarvāstivādin version, "development" refers to the practice of satipaṭṭhana internally and externally, this being one of the few occurrences of this formula in the Saṃyutta. Tacked on after the end of this discourse is the sentence:

The development of the four *satipaṭṭhānas* in the past and future are also taught in this way.

This must be one of the most obvious sectarian interpolations in the Āgamas. It establishes a clear connection between "internal/external" and "past/future."

Here we engage with an interesting aspect of Buddhist, or more generally Indian, thought, the correlation between the personal and the cosmic. In the Upanishads this is most famously expressed in the identity of Ātman and Brahman, the individual soul and the world-spirit being in essence the same. Parallel ideas are found in Buddhism, for example, in the correlation between different stage of jhana and the different realms of rebirth that they produce. One of the clearest explanations of this is by the arhat Anuruddha:

Suppose an oil-lamp is burning with an impure wick; because of the impurity of the oil and the wick it burns dimly.

So too, when a monk resolved upon and pervading a defiled radiance his bodily disturbance has not fully subsided, his sloth & torpor have not been fully eliminated, his restlessness & remorse have not been fully removed.

Because of this he practices dhyana, as it were, dimly.

With the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of the Gods of Defiled Radiance. (Anuruddha Sutta, M 127.16/3:151)

While satipaṭṭhana is not mentioned here, we shall see later that Venerable Anuruddha was renowned for his emphasis on satipaṭṭhana, so the connection should not be ruled out.

**Peter Masefield** has discussed some of the relations between the Buddhist and Upanishadic texts, and says that the usage of "internal" (*ajjhataṃ*) is identical in both contexts, while the Buddhist usage of "external" (*bahiddha*) embraces both the "cosmic" (*adhidaivatam*) and the "objective" (*adhibhūtam*) of the Upanishads.<sup>183</sup>

Another interesting indication for the meaning of internal/external is in the phrasing of the contemplation of mind in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta: "One understands mind with lust as "Mind with lust"..." etc. [34]. The phrasing is identical with the psychic power of being able to read the mind of another person; this also correlates with the claim by Venerable Anuruddha that

<sup>181</sup> M 28 = SD 6.16.

<sup>182</sup> **Bhāvanā S**, S 47.39/SĀ 610.

<sup>183</sup> Masefield. "My thanks to the author for supplying me with a copy of this article." (Sujato's fn)

his own development of such powers was due to satipatthana. The passage on the psychic powers appears often in the gradual training, whereas the passage on knowing the mind in satipatthana appears just once. Surprisingly, then the passage on psychic powers should be regarded as the basic source context. (Sujato 2004b:120-122)

**3.7d “Internally-externally.”** The third mode of attention in developing satipatthana is to be mindful “both internally and externally.” The Majjhima Commentary simply states that since one cannot observe an object both internally and externally at the same time, the instruction implies that one should alternate between these two modes (MA 1:249).

**The Vibhaṅga**, however, offers a more helpful perspective: its presentation of contemplating both internally and externally points to an understanding of the observed object as such, without considering it as being a part of one’s subjective experience, or that of others. This is clearly implied in the way the respective satipatthana contemplations are formulated in **the Vibhaṅga**:

[Contemplation of the body]

**355. Internally:** Here a monk reviews the body internally... in this body, there is... (*idha bhikkhu ajjhataṃ kāyaṃ... paccavekkhati: atthi imasmim kāye...*).

**Externally:** Here a monk reviews the body externally... in that body, there is... (*idha bhikkhu bahiddhā kāyaṃ... paccavekkhati: atthi ’ssa kāye...*).<sup>184</sup>

**Internally and externally:** Here a monk reviews the body internally and externally... in the body, there is... (*idha bhikkhu ajjhata, bahiddhā kāyaṃ... paccavekkhati: atthi kāye...*). (Vbh 193 f)

[Contemplation of feelings]

**363. Internally:** Here a monk, feeling a pleasant feeling, knows, “I feel a pleasant feeling”... (*idha bhikkhu sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamāno: sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyāmi ti...*).

**Externally:** Here, when a pleasant feeling is being felt in another, a monk knows that he (the other person) feels a pleasant feeling... (*idha bhikkhu sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamānaṃ: sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyāmi ti pajānāti...*).<sup>185</sup>

**Internally and externally:** Here, when a pleasant feeling is being felt, a monk knows, “Pleasant feeling”... (*idha bhikkhu sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamānaṃ: sukhaṃ vedanā ti pajānāti...*). (Vbh 195 f) [5B.2]

This similarly applies for the mind (Vbh 365/197 f) and for dharmas (Vbh 367/199-201). The Vibhaṅga Commentary, after explaining that “internally” means “in oneself,” and “externally” as “in another,” succinctly explains that “the body internally and externally” (*ajjhata, bahiddhā, kāye*), thus:

By “**the body internally and externally**” is meant that at times, in one’s own body, at times, in another’s body. By the first method, laying hold of the body in one’s own body is meant. By the second method, doing so in another’s body. By the third method, at times in one’s own body, and at times in another’s body. But there is no combined internal-external object. Here is stated the time when one who is familiar with his meditation object goes back and forth (from one object to the other).<sup>186</sup> (VbhA §1038/219)

Analyo then remarks that

Practised in this way, satipatthana contemplation shifts towards an increasingly “objective” and detached stance, from which the observed phenomena are experienced as such, independent of whether they occur in oneself or others. (Analyo 2003:98)

<sup>184</sup> Here *atth’issa = atthi assa*, where *assa* is 3<sup>rd</sup> sg m of *ayaṃ*, usu tr as “this” (pointing to a near object), or equivalent of “that” in English when the object is out of one’s reach.

<sup>185</sup> The syntax here is a bit tricky: lit “Here when a pleasant is felt, thus, ‘I feel a pleasant feeling,’ the monk is aware [knows].”

<sup>186</sup> *Ajjhata, bahiddhā kāye ti kālena attano kāye, kālena parassa kāye. Paṭhama, nayena hi attano kāye kāya, pariggaho vutto, dutiya, nayena parassa kāye, tatiya, nayena kālena attano kālena parassa kāye. Ajjhata, bahiddhā pana ghaṭit’ārammaṇaṃ nāma n’atthi. Pagaṇa, kammaṭṭhānassa pana aparāparaṃ sañcaraṇa, kālo ettha kathito.* (VbhA 219)

This approach is further supported by **the Sāmagāma Sutta** (M 104), where the same two terms are used when countering various unwholesome states and behaviour, whether personally (*ajjhatta*) or in others (*bahiddhā*).<sup>187</sup> Further, in **the Jana,vasabha Sutta** (D 18), in a context directly related to satipaṭṭhana, “external” explicitly refers to the body, the feelings, the mind and the dharmas of others.<sup>188</sup> Analayo notes that this passage is very significant “since it is the only discourse to provide additional information on the nature of ‘external’ satipaṭṭhana.” (2003:99)

**3.7e How to know another’s mind.** The comprehensiveness of satipaṭṭhana—covering every aspect of one’s physical life—becomes obvious even after a cursory look at the five exercises of the contemplation on the body [4-33]. Satipaṭṭhana’s comprehensiveness however does not stop at the bodily level, but also covers the affective, the cognitive and the spiritual levels, which are the functions, respectively, of the observing of feelings [34-33], the observing of mind [34-44], and the five exercises of the observing of dharmas [36-45]. However, a problem arises here: while it is understandable how one is able to know and observe the bodily states of another through direct perception, it is not so in the case of the affective, the cognitive and the spiritual states of another.

One possible way of knowing these non-bodily states of another is to develop awareness of another’s feelings and mental state by carefully observing their outer manifestation, namely, his facial expression, physical posture, actions and speech.<sup>189</sup> There are several discourses that support this notion of vicarious knowledge. **The Sampasādanīya Sutta** (D 28),<sup>190</sup> for example, lists four means of knowing another’s mind, that is,

- (1) through what one sees;
- (2) through what one hears;
- (3) through thinking (such as reflecting on what one has heard);
- (4) through mind-reading.

**The (Pāṭihāriya) Saṅgārava Sutta** (A 3.60)<sup>191</sup> speaks of the three kinds of miracles (pāṭihāriyā): those of psychic powers (*iddhi, pāṭihāriya*), of mind-reading (*ādesanā, pāṭihāriya*), and of instruction (*anusāsani, pāṭihāriya*). The sutta defines **mind-reading** in this way (summarized):

- (1) By means of a sign (*nimitta*);
- (2) By hearing the voices of humans, non-humans or devas;
- (3) By listening to the sounds of a person’s thought-vibrations<sup>192</sup> (*vitakka, vipphāra, sadda*);
- (4) By mentally penetrating the direction of his mental dispositions when he is in a thought-free state of meditation. (A 3.60.5/1:171)

The Aṅguttara Commentary<sup>193</sup> explains how each of these methods work:

- (1) By “sign” is meant a revelation one receives from a deva who has supernormal knowledge of others’ minds;
- (2) Through directly hearing the voices of those beings;
- (3) The third method depends on the subtle sounds produced by the thoughts that are penetrated by the divine ear itself;
- (4) For one in a thought-free meditation, the mind-reader can only predict, on the basis of the meditator’s mental disposition, the thoughts he would think on emerging from the meditation.

**The Caṅkī Sutta** (M 95) explains how a lay follower, observing the bodily and verbal conduct of a monk, will be able to assess whether the monk’s mind is under the influence of greed, or hate, or delusion.<sup>194</sup> As such, one does not need psychic power, but mindfulness and some common sense, to know the true mental state of another. Taken in this way, we can see that the external application of mindfulness as taught in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is a practical possibility. That is to say, the external satipaṭṭhana could be undertaken by directing mindfulness towards another person’s actions, posture, speech, tone of voice, and facial expression, as reflecting his feelings, mental state and spirituality.

<sup>187</sup> M 104.7-11/2:246.

<sup>188</sup> D 18.26/2:216.

<sup>189</sup> Cf Khemacari 1985:26.

<sup>190</sup> M 28.6/3:103 f; briefly mentioned in **Kevalāḍḍha S** (D 11.3/1:212).

<sup>191</sup> A 3.60.4-6/1:171 = SD 16.10.

<sup>192</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi’s tr.

<sup>193</sup> AA 2:269-271.

<sup>194</sup> M 95.17/2:171 f.

**The sequence of mindfulness practice**—internal, then external, then both—is also significant. The first step of internal mindfulness serves as a basis for the second step, the external contemplation. Robert Mann (et al), for example, observes that “the forces at work within other people are the same as the forces that motivate our own behaviour” (1992:112).

Similarly, insights gained during external contemplation will in turn also support internal contemplation. For example, it is comparatively easy to uncover the underlying motives of particular reactions in someone else, while the same motives might pass undetected if one is the actor oneself. (Analayo 2003:97 n18)

**Nyanaponika** explains that “many things permit of better understanding when observed in others, or in external objects, than in oneself” (1962:58).<sup>195</sup>

For a balanced development of awareness, this shift from the internal to the external is of considerable importance. Awareness applied only internally can lead to self-centredness. One can become excessively concerned with what happens with and within oneself while at the same time remaining unaware of how one’s action and behaviour affect others. Practising both internal and external *satipaṭṭhāna* can prevent such lopsidedness and achieve a skilful balance between introversion and extroversion. (Analayo 2003:98)<sup>196</sup>

**3.7f Modern perspectives.** Modern teachers and scholars have given various interpretations of the internal-external aspect of satipaṭṭhāna practice, ranging from taking them in a literal spatial sense<sup>197</sup> to the most abstruse (as between apparent and ultimate truth).<sup>198</sup> **Analayo**, in *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*, under the heading “Alternative interpretations of internal and external,” adds:

“Internal” (*ajjhata*) occurs in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta itself in a clearly spatial sense, referring to the six internal senses in contrast to their external objects. However, the Pāli term used in this context for the external sense objects is not *bahiddhā*, but *bāhira*.<sup>199</sup> In contrast, “internal” (*ajjhata*) and “external” (*bahiddhā*) as qualities mentioned in the “refrain” do not seem to convey such a spatial distinction. In the case of contemplating the sense-spheres, for example, such a spatial understanding of “internal” and “external” do not yield a meaningful way of practice, since according to the “refrain” the entire sense-sphere, consisting of internal sense and external object, has to be contemplated internally and then externally.

The difficulty involved in taking “internal” and “external” to represent a spatial distinction extends to most of the *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations. Neither states of mind nor such *dhammas* as the hindrances or the awakening factors fit easily into a distinction between spatially internal and external occurrences, unless one were to adopt the commentarial interpretations and take “external” to refer to states of mind, hindrances, or awakening factors occurring in other persons. (Analayo 2003:99)

The practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* is, as such, the application of focussed awareness to immediate experience in both its subjective (sense-experience) and objective (sense-object) aspects. This reflexive nature of *satipaṭṭhāna*, as noted by **Bodhi**, is reflected thus:

[O]ne is to contemplate body *in the body*, feelings *in feelings*, mind *in mind*, phenomena *in phenomena*. The reiteration signals that the contemplative act must isolate each domain of mindfulness from the others and attend to it as it is in itself. This means the given object has to be laid bare, stripped of the layers of mental proliferation which usually clutter our perception and prevent us from seeing the true characteristics of phenomena. The meditator must see the body in the act of breathing as simply a breathing body, not as a person or self who is breathing; feelings as simply feelings, not as episodes in a long biography; states of mind as

<sup>195</sup> See also Bullen 1969:32 & Khemacari 1985:23.

<sup>196</sup> Cf Nyanaponika 1951:35.

<sup>197</sup> Goenka 1999:54; Solé-Leris 1986:28, and Thate 1996:44.

<sup>198</sup> Lee Dhammadharo 1977:263-266; Ñāṇasamvara 1961:27.

<sup>199</sup> M 1:51: *ajjhata, bāhiresu āyatanesu*.

simply states of mind, not as scenes in a personal drama; phenomena as mere phenomena, not as personal achievements or liabilities. (S:B 1506)

Discussing the written word on meditation is like discussing the text of a car driving manual: in the final analysis, it is the effective personal effort that counts. **Analayo** gives these sobering comments:

In the end, whichever interpretation one may adopt, once contemplation is practised both internally and externally it entails a shift towards a comprehensive type of practice.<sup>200</sup> At this stage even the boundary between “I” and “other” or “internal” and “external” is left behind, leading to a comprehensive vision of phenomena as such, independent of any sense of ownership. Such a more wide-ranging view involves either a contemplation of oneself and others, or a contemplation of any internal phenomenon together with its external counterpart. Thus each of the ways of understanding “internal” and “external” discussed above ultimately leads to a more comprehensive appreciation of the phenomena under observation.<sup>201</sup> (2003:102)

Let us for a moment ask: in gauging the feelings, mind or dharmas in another, what if one is mistaken? Would this in any way affect one’s meditation. It is important here to remember that the purpose of meditation is not mind-reading, or to apply the three modes of attention for their own sakes. These three modes are ways of keeping to one’s satipatthana practice so that the meditator gains mental focus, and are only used as and when needed. As such, even when one’s perception of another’s feelings, mind or dharmas is wrong, it does not matter at all. One has however to deal with that perception, whatever it is, and to see it for what it is: mind-made, impermanent, unsatisfactory, without an abiding entity.

**3.7g The 6 internal and external sense-bases.** Section iii of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta has the technical term, *chasu ajjhattika, bāhiresu āyatanesu*, literally translated as “in the six internal and external sense-bases.” The *Buddhist Dictionary* defines *āyatana* as “The 12 ‘bases’ or ‘sources’ on which depend the mental processes, consist of five physical sense-organs and consciousness, being the six personal (*ajjhattika*) bases, and the six objects, the so-called external (*bāhira*) bases.”<sup>202</sup>

The six internal senses (*ajjhattik’āyatana*) are the faculties of perception (*cakkhu, sota, ghana, jivhā, kāya*). The suttas use a different set of Pali terms for the corresponding physical organs (eye = *akkhi*, ear = *kaṇṇa*, nose = *nāsā*). The fact that the former set is more common in the discourses shows that the emphasis is on the subjective, ie one’s ability to see, hear, smell, taste and touch. Experience as represented by the 6 types of consciousness, however, is the outcome of two determinants: the “objective” in-coming sensory impressions and the “subjective” way in which these sensory impressions are received and cognized. This is the tacit understanding regarding the senses underlying sati patthana practice.

**Ñāṇamoli** explains these two determinants as follows: *ajjhattik’āyatana* = the organization of experience; *bahiddh’āyatana* = the experience of the organized.<sup>203</sup> **Van Zeyst** explains: “the inner sphere...constitutes the subjective element which is the capacity of reaction, and the outer sphere constitutes the objective element which produces the impact.”<sup>204</sup> **Analayo** adds this insightful observation here:

<sup>200</sup> This is suggested by several verses in **the Sutta Nipāta**, where “internal” and “external” occur together in the sense of “whatever there is,” expressing a sense of comprehensiveness, cf Sn 516, 521, 527, 738. The need for such comprehensiveness is not only a characteristic of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice, but also features in a observing of emptiness described in M 3:12, which similarly proceeds from “internal” to “external” and culminates in observing undertaken “both internally and externally.” (Analayo’s fn)

<sup>201</sup> A similar shift towards comprehensiveness features in the standard descriptions on how to develop insight with regard to the five aggregates, where after a detailed examination of a single aggregate, the insight gained is applied to all possible instances of it (cf eg M 22.26/1:138). (Analayo’s fn, ref expanded)

<sup>202</sup> See BDict: *āyatana* (2).

<sup>203</sup> *A Thinker’s Notebook*, 1971:159.

<sup>204</sup> Ency Bsm 470 “Āyatana.”



Regarding contemplation of the sense-spheres, the Pali versions begin with the meditator knowing each sense and its respective object.<sup>205</sup> Their counterpart in the *Madhyama āgama*, however, does not direct mindfulness to the senses and their respective objects, but mention both merely as conditions for the arising of the fetter, beginning with its actual instruction only after this point.<sup>206</sup>

Hence according to the *Madhyama āgama* presentation, the task here is not to be mindful of the senses or their objects as such, but of the fetter that may arise at any sense-door. This would indeed seem to be the central import of mindfulness of the sense-spheres, namely awareness of the fettering force of perceptual experience and its relation to the arising of unwholesome mental reactions and associations. Here the *Madhyama āgama*'s instruction seems a little more straightforward than its Pali counterpart. The remainder of the *Madhyama āgama* version's instructions for contemplating the six sense-spheres resembles the instructions found in the Pali versions.

[Note: **D 22/2:302,20 & M 10/1:61,15** speak of the meditator knowing: (1) the fetter, (2) how the unarisen fetter arises, (3) how the arisen fetter is abandoned, (4) how the abandoned fetter will not arise again in the future. **MĀ 98 = T1.584a14** presents the same in terms of the meditator knowing: (1) if the fetter is present, (2) if the fetter is not present, (3) if the unarisen fetter arises, (4) if the arisen fetter ceases and does not arise again. Another difference is that MĀ 98 has mindfulness of the sense-spheres precede mindfulness of the hindrances, whereas the Pali presentations follow the reverse sequence.]” (Analayo 2005:12; emphases added)

**3.7h The importance of lovingkindness.** As we have noted earlier [3.7e], the balance awareness of self and of others is vitally shown in the satipaṭṭhana practice in the three directional modes of mindfulness, that is, internal mindfulness, external mindfulness, and alternating between the two [3.7a]. In fact, satipaṭṭhana becomes even more effective, especially for the neophyte, when the three directional modes of mindfulness are done with lovingkindness (*mettā*), that is, the unconditional acceptance of self and other. **Analayo**, in his classic work, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization* clearly emphasizes the importance of lovingkindness in satipaṭṭhana practice:

Loving kindness not only provides preparatory ground for the practice of insight meditation, but it can only also directly contribute to realization. According to the Buddha, the distinctive character of loving kindness meditation as taught by him lies in combining it with the awakening factors,<sup>207</sup> in this way directly harnessing loving kindness to the progress towards realization. Several discourses relate to the practice of loving kindness in particular to progress from the stage of stage of stream-entry to that of non-returning. Clearly, the advantages of developing loving kindness are not confined to its function as an antidote to anger and irritation. (Analayo 2003:195 f; emphases added)

**The Aṭṭhaka, nāgāra Sutta** (M 52) explains in detail how to combine lovingkindness with insight: on emerging from dhyanas developed through lovingkindness, one cultivates insight into the impermanent and conditioned nature of this attainment.<sup>208</sup> **The Vatthūpama Sutta** (M 7)<sup>209</sup> and **the Sālha Sutta** (A 3.66)<sup>210</sup> describe the transition from lovingkindness into insight with the reflection: “There is this; there is what is inferior; there is what is superior; and there is complete escape from this entire field of perception.”<sup>211</sup> The Commentaries explain the last to be a reference to nirvana.<sup>212</sup> Moreover,

<sup>205</sup> D 22/12:302,18; M 10.1:61,15.

<sup>206</sup> Analayo's n: The instruction in **MĀ 98** runs: “based on eye and form(s), an internal fetter arises. When there really is a fetter internally, the monk knows according to reality that internally there is a fetter” (T1.584a14: 眼緣色生內結, 比丘者, 內實有結知內有結如真).

<sup>207</sup> “Awakening factors,” *bojjhaṅga*: see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.42/1:61 f) = SD 13.3(42).

<sup>208</sup> M 52/1:349-353.

<sup>209</sup> M 7.13-18/1:38 f.

<sup>210</sup> A 3.66.13/1:196 f.

<sup>211</sup> According to **Aronson**, “the meditation on love is the soil within which concentration and...insight are cultivated” (1986:51).

<sup>212</sup> DA 1:176; AA 2:306.

the (**Aṭṭh'ānisaṁsā**) **Mettā Sutta** (A 8.1/4:150 f) and the **Metta,bhāvanā Sutta** (It 1.3.7/21) point out that the cultivation of lovingkindness helps to weaken the mental fetters.

In the (**Haliddavasana**) **Mettā Sutta** (S 46.54), the Buddha points out that the combination of lovingkindness with the awakening factors is what distinguishes the Buddhist approach from the way that lovingkindness is practised by contemporary recluses.<sup>213</sup> It is also relevant here to point out that the Buddha's way of teaching the cultivation of lovingkindness is its immeasurable and unlimited pervasion of all directions, as stated for example in the **Vatthūpama Sutta** (M 7).<sup>214</sup> In the **Cūl'-accharā Sutta** (A 1.6), the Buddha speaks of lovingkindness in the simplest of terms:

Bhikshus, if even for just the moment of a finger-snap<sup>215</sup> a monk associates with (*āsevati*)... cultivates (*bhāveti*)... pays attention (*manasikaroti*) to a thought of lovingkindness, he is called a monk. His meditation is not in vain. He acts in accordance with the Master's teaching. He follows his advice. He does not eat the country's alms in vain.<sup>216</sup> How much more so if he were to often cultivate it! (A 1.6.3-5/1:10 f)

**3.8 IMPERMANENCE.** Here we shall discuss the second part of the insight refrain [3.7a], namely: "Watching the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away" (D 22.2e = M 10.5).<sup>217</sup> In the course of watching the body, feelings, the mind and dharmas, the practitioner goes on to watch the "nature of arising" (*samudaya,dhamma*), the "nature of passing away" (*vaya,dhamma*), and the "nature of (both) arising and passing away" (*samudaya,vaya,dhamma*).<sup>218</sup> The translation here follows the **Samudaya,dhamma Sutta 1**,<sup>219</sup> which is a reflection on the impermanence of the five aggregates. It should also be noted that the sutta defines "ignorance" (*avijjā*) as not knowing that the five aggregates are of the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away; and "true knowledge" as truly knowing that the five aggregates are of the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away.

The **Avijjā Sutta 1**<sup>220</sup> similarly instructs that the senses, sense-objects and feelings that arise on account of the senses (whether pleasant, painful or neutral) are all impermanent—knowing this, one abandons ignorance, and true knowledge arises in one. While the **(Āyatana) Nandi-k,khaya Sutta 1**<sup>221</sup> shows how the mind is liberated through seeing the six senses as impermanent, its parallel, the **(Āyatana) Nandi-k,khaya Sutta 2**,<sup>222</sup> shows how the mind is liberated through seeing the six sense-objects as impermanent. Another parallel sutta, the **(Khandha) Nandi-k,khaya Sutta 1**,<sup>223</sup> on the other hand, shows how the reflection on the aggregates as being impermanent liberates one's mind.

All this shows that "the direct experience of impermanence represents the 'power' aspect of medi-

<sup>213</sup> S 46.54/5:119.

<sup>214</sup> M 7.13-19/1:38. See also D 1:251, M 2:207, S 4:322.

<sup>215</sup> "Even for just the moment of a finger-snap," *accharā,saṅghāta,mattam*. Also in **Velāma S** (A 9.21/-4:395 f).

<sup>216</sup> Comy say that there are 4 ways in which a monks use his alms: (1) an immoral monk uses them (undeservedly) like a thief; (2) a virtuous ordinary person who does not reflect on them is like a debtor; (3) a trainee (*sekhā*, ie one of the 7 Saints, short of the arhat-become) uses them as an inheritance; (4) an arhat uses them as a proper owner.

<sup>217</sup> Colloquially, this is often spoken of as "Watching the nature of rising, of falling (away), and of rising and falling (away)."

<sup>218</sup> See Gethin 2001:53 & Analayo 2003: 102 f. Cf AK Warder 1971b:282 f on this usage of *-dhamma* in the Nikāyas. The Comys, however, take *dhamma* as indicating the conditions for the arising and fall of the body, etc (see DA 3:765, 768, 769; MA 1:249 f), although the Subcomys also allow that *dhamma* can have the sense of "nature" here (DAṬ 2:381; MAPṬ:Be 1:350: *pakati,vācī vā dhamma,saddo*). In the end the point would seem to make little difference to the general purport of the expression: the *bhikkhu* sees how body, etc, arise and fall away. (Gethin's fn; normalized)

<sup>219</sup> S 22.126/3:171 = SD 12.5.

<sup>220</sup> S 35.79/4:50 = SD 12.6.

<sup>221</sup> S 35.155/142 = SD 12.7.

<sup>222</sup> S 35.156/142 = SD 12.8.

<sup>223</sup> S 22.51/3:51 = SD 12.9.

tative wisdom.”<sup>224</sup> **The Pañca Sekha, balā Sutta** (A 5.2)<sup>225</sup> mentions “the learner’s five powers,” that is, those qualities that would expedite a saint’s journey towards total arhathood. A parallel list, called “the factors of striving” (*padhāniyaṅga*), is given in **the Kaṇṇaka-ṭṭhala Sutta** (M 90) and elsewhere.<sup>226</sup> Here is a comparative table of the two sets of factors:

<u>The factors of striving</u>	<u>The learner’s powers</u>
1. faith ( <i>saddhā</i> )	1. faith ( <i>saddhā</i> )
2. health ( <i>app’ābādho appātaṅko</i> )	2. moral shame ( <i>hiri</i> )
3. honesty & sincerity ( <i>asaṭṭho</i> )	3. moral fear ( <i>ottappa</i> )
4. energy ( <i>āraddha, viriyo</i> )	4. effort ( <i>viriya</i> )
5. wisdom ( <i>paññā</i> )	5. wisdom ( <i>paññā</i> )

Of the learner’s five powers, wisdom is the most important: **the (Kūṭa) Sekha, balā Sutta** (A 5.12) declares, “Of these five powers of the learner, this is the foremost; this is what holds them together, namely, the power of wisdom.”<sup>227</sup> This is the wisdom regarding the arising and ending of phenomena, which also defines the wisdom as a “factor of striving.” As such, it is clear that the observing of “the arising and passing away” of things is to be done both by the saint and the lay.

Impermanence (*aniccatā*) is one of the well known “three characteristics” (*ti, lakkhaṇā*); the other two being suffering or unsatisfactoriness (*dukkhatā*) and not-self (*anattatā*).<sup>228</sup> These **three universal characteristics** are always given in this sequence, and for good reason. The suttas often speak of the relationship of the three characteristics by presenting this sequence, that is, from the awareness of impermanence (*anicca, saññā*), there arises the appreciating of the unsatisfactoriness in the impermanent (*anicce dukkha, saññā*), and then on to the understanding of selfless nature of the unsatisfactory (*dukkhe anatta, saññā*).<sup>229</sup>

The same pattern is found in **the Anatta, lakkhaṇa Sutta** (S 22.59),<sup>230</sup> where the Buddha exhorts the five monks to observe the impermanent nature of subjective experience in terms of the five aggregates. Based on this understanding, he shows them that whatever is impermanent can only bring unsatisfactoriness, and therefore cannot be considered as “I,” “mine,” or “my self.” This understanding brought awakening to the five monks.

**The (Satipaṭṭhāna) Vibhaṅga Sutta** (S 47.10)<sup>231</sup> highlights the importance of cultivating insight into the arising and passing away of phenomena, so that from merely establishing a focus of mindfulness, one goes on to its full cultivation (*bhāvanā*). This shift from basic cultivation to full cultivation of satipaṭṭhana lies in the observing of the nature of arising and passing away.

This passage underlies the importance of the “refrain” for a proper development of *sati-paṭṭhāna*. Mere awareness of the various objects listed under the four *satipaṭṭhānas* might not suffice for the task of developing penetrative insight. What is additionally required is to move on to a comprehensive and equanimous vision of impermanence.<sup>232</sup> (Anlayo 2003:104 f)

<sup>224</sup> Anlayo 2003:103. Impermanence as the key aspect of insight is also emphasized by Fleishman 1986:11; Ledi 1999a:151; Nyanaponika 1958:60; Solé-Leris 1986:82; Than Daing 1970:62 (Anlayo’s fn). See also Ledi 1965:283.

<sup>225</sup> A 5.2/3:2 = SD 12.10.

<sup>226</sup> M 90/2:125-133 = SD 10.8.

<sup>227</sup> *Etam aggaṃ eta saṅgāhikaṃ etaṃ saṅghātaniyaṃ yad idam pañña, balaṃ*, A 5.12/3:10.

<sup>228</sup> S 4:1; A 1:286; Dh 277-279; cf VbhA 49 f.

<sup>229</sup> D 3:243. 251, 290, 291; S 5:132, 345; A 1:41, 3:85, 277, 334, 452, 4:46, 52, 148, 387, 465, 5:105, 309.

(Literally tr, the pattern runs: “cognition of impermanence, cognition of unsatisfactoriness in the impermanent, cognition of not-self in the unsatisfactory.”) This pattern is also reflected in the statement “what is impermanent that is unsatisfactory, what is unsatisfactory that is not-self,” eg at S 3:22, 45, 82, 4:1, 153. Cf also S:B 844.

Ñāṇananda explains: “in *sukha* and *attā* we have the affective and conative reactions to the illusion of permanence” (1971:92, 1986:103). (Anlayo’s fn, normalized)

<sup>230</sup> S 22.59/3:66-68 = SD 1.2.

<sup>231</sup> S 47.10/5:183 = SD 12.11.

<sup>232</sup> Anlayo’s fn: In fact, M 1:62 speaks of the need to “develop” *satipaṭṭhāna* for it to lead to highest realization: “if anyone should develop these four *satipaṭṭhānas*...one of two fruits could be expected for him”; an expression that is reminiscent of the reference to “development” (*bhāvanā*) at S 5:183 [(**Satipaṭṭhāna**) **Vibhaṅga-**

For the attainment of sainthood (spiritual liberation), the observing of impermanence has to be complete; in other words, it should be applied to all the five aggregates, as admonished in **the Anicca,saññā Sutta**.<sup>233</sup> As **the Aniccā Sutta** (A 6.98)<sup>234</sup> declares: one who sees permanence in any phenomenon will never be able to realize sainthood. Such a distinctive feature is this of the stream-winner, that—as stated in **the Kiñci Saṅkhāra Sutta** (A 6.93)<sup>235</sup>—he is said to be incapable of believing any phenomenon to be permanent. And yet, as **the Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1) declares, even if one has mere faith in the impermanence of the six sense-bases, one is surely on the way to entering the path; or, if one who accept this truth of impermanence after reflecting on them with some wisdom, is similarly assured of stream-winning even in this life itself.<sup>236</sup>

**3.9 MINDFULNESS OF A “BODY” MERELY FOR KNOWING AND AWARENESS.** Here we will discuss the third part of the insight formula, namely, “Maintaining the mindfulness of a ‘body’ merely for knowing and awareness” (D 22.2e = M 10.5).

**3.9a Language and skillful means.** This is the key philosophical process underlying satipaṭṭhana practice, indeed, it is the foundation of the Buddhist conception of skillful means—that is, the wise and compassionate use of language and concepts to bring about samvega and liberation in oneself or in another—as taught in such suttas as the **Alaggadūpama Sutta** (M 22),<sup>237</sup> **the Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38)<sup>238</sup> and **the Araṇa,vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 137),<sup>239</sup> and the numerous parables, similes and imageries that are found throughout the Nikāyas.

A modern innovation, inspired by such statements such as the Satipaṭṭhāna refrain regarding “maintaining the mindfulness of a ‘body’ merely for knowing and awareness,” is that of “labelling” [3.9c], that is, a sub-verbal mental noting of distractions and any phenomenon arising during one’s meditation.

**Sujato’s** comments on the observing of the mind (*cittānupassanā*), showing how it deals basically with the abandoning of the mental hindrances, also applies to a proper understanding of “labelling” or “mental noting”.<sup>240</sup>

The overall context, the progressive structure of the [Satipaṭṭhāna] discourse, and the inclusion of the mind “compressed” [narrowed] (by sloth) and “scattered” [distracted] (by restlessness) all suggest that here we are basically dealing with **the abandoning of the hindrances** on the plane of samadhi, an interpretation confirmed by the commentary. Here again, as in the contemplation of feelings, a distinctive facet of all the satipaṭṭhana material is the direct experience of the “exalted” mind, the “unexcelled” [unsurpassable] mind, the mind “in samadhi,” the “released” [liberated] mind—all synonyms for jhana.

These two sections share a common syntactical structure. For example: “When feeling a pleasant feeling, one understands ‘I feel a pleasant feeling.’” Or in the contemplation of mind: “One understands mind with lust as ‘mind with lust.’”

This reflexive structure is shared also with *ānāpānasati*: “When breathing in a long breath, one understands ‘I am breathing in a long breath.’” The phrasing in “quotation marks” (representing the Pali particle *iti*) was perhaps what prompted some schools to equate satipaṭṭhana meditation with mental noting. But this would be a naively literal interpretation.

---

**ga S** = SD 12.11]. It is noteworthy that, in contrast to the emphasis the Pāli texts place on observing of impermanence, the Madhyama Āgama version of the *satipaṭṭhāna* “refrain” does not mention it at all. The Ekottara Āgama version, however, has preserved it at least in relation to contemplation of feeling, mind, and *dhammas* (cf Thich Minh Chau 1991:88 & Thich Nhat Hanh 1990b:173, 175, 177). The injunction to observe “arising” and “disappearing” in relation to all four *satipaṭṭhānas* occurs also in the Saṃyukta Āgama equivalent of **the Samudaya S** (S 5:184); cf the tr in Hurvitz 1978:215. See Analayo 2003:104-107.

<sup>233</sup> S 22.102/3:155-157 = SD SD 12.12.

<sup>234</sup> A 6.98/3:441 f = SD 12.13.

<sup>235</sup> A 6.93/3:439 = SD 12.14.

<sup>236</sup> S 25.1/3:225 = SD 16.7.

<sup>237</sup> M 22/1:130-142: the parables of the water-snake (§10), of the raft (§§13-14)

<sup>238</sup> M 38.14/1:135 (the parable of the raft).

<sup>239</sup> M 137.12/3:234 f = SD 7.8 (on the use of local language).

<sup>240</sup> On noting, see **Giri-m-ānanda S** (A 10.60) = SD 15.15 Introd (4).

Similar usages are found, for example, in the standard passage on the formless attainments. Due to the idiomaticness of the Pali, this is difficult to translate; literally it would be: “Space is infinite,’ one enters & abides in the field of infinite space.” Usually translators would say something like: “Aware that ‘Space is infinite,’ one enters & abides in the field of infinite space.” Obviously here the meditator has passed well beyond thinking or noting anything. The use of *iti* with repetitions in such contexts seems rather to intimate the reflexive, “seeking within” nature of meditative contemplation. One is not merely knowing the feeling, but one is conscious *that* one is knowing the feeling. (Sujato 2004b:149 f)

Here, **Analayo** makes a similar note as Sujato, saying,

The way this instruction [the satipatthana refrain] is phrased suggests the use of mental labeling. Mindfulness is established that ‘there is a body’ (feelings, mind, *dhammas*). The Pāli particle *iti* used here indicates direct speech, which in the present context suggests a form of mental noting. This is in fact not the only instance of this kind of recommendation in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Most of the instructions in the discourse use direct speech to formulate what is to be known.<sup>241</sup>

This way of presentation shows that concepts, especially when used as labeling tools for the purpose of mental noting, can be skillfully employed with the context of *satipaṭṭhāna*.<sup>242</sup> Thus the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* does not require a complete relinquishment of all forms of verbal knowledge.<sup>243</sup> In fact, concepts are intrinsically related to cognition (*saññā*), since the ability to recognize and understand relies on a subtle level of mental verbalization and thereby on the use of concepts. The skillful use of labeling during *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation can help strengthen clear recognition and understanding. At the same time, labelling introduces a healthy degree of inner detachment, since the act of apostrophizing one’s moods and emotions diminishes one’s identification with them. (Analayo 2003:113 f)

A conceptual approach to meditation often helps initially, but in due course, when the mind is calm enough, it should be dispensed with, so that one looks *directly* into the mind. **Analayo’s** comments here are instructive:

Clearly, for the Buddha the mere absence of concepts does not constitute the final goal of meditation practice.<sup>244</sup> Concepts are not the problem, the problem is how concepts are used. An *arahant* still employs concepts, yet without being bound by them.<sup>245</sup>

On the other hand, *satipaṭṭhāna* has to be clearly distinguished from mere intellectual reflection. What this part of the “refrain” indicates is the extent to which concepts and labels are appropriate within the context of insight meditation. This should be kept to an absolute minimum, only “to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness.” Labelling is not an end in itself, only a means to an end. Once knowledge and awareness are well established, labelling can be dispensed with. (Analayo 2003:114)

<sup>241</sup> Eg M 1:56: “he knows, ‘I breathe in long’”; “he is aware of a lustful mind to be ‘lustful’”; M 1:59: “he knows, ‘I feel a pleasant feeling’”; “he knows, ‘there is the mindfulness awakening factor in me’”; M 1:162: “he knows as it really is, ‘this is *dukkha*’.” [Analayo’s fn]

<sup>242</sup> On labelling, cf Fryba 1970:130-132; Mangalo 1988:34; Nyanaponika 1968:13; Sujiva 2000:181-183. For a differing opinion, see Sujato [9a] below.

<sup>243</sup> See Analayo 2003:113 n89 for refs regarding the need for ego skills for successful meditation and the danger of cultivating intellectual vacuity. **Ñāṇananda** speaks of “rallying the concepts for the higher purpose of developing wisdom whereby concepts themselves are transcended” (1971:60).

<sup>244</sup> Analayo: In fact, even the fourth immaterial attainment (*n’eva,saññā,nāsaññ’āyatana*), a deep meditative experience as far removed from concepts as possible within the realm of mundane experience, still falls short of realization. Cf Hamilton 1996:60.

<sup>245</sup> Analayo: According to **It 53**, *arahants*, because of their penetrative understanding of concepts and verbal expressions, are able to use them freely, without in any way falling prey to them. Cf also **Ñāṇananda** 1986:103: “to believe that by merely demolishing concepts or theories one can rise above them is to stop at the fringe of the problem.”

Moreover, the Dharma as the liberating truth has to be directly experienced, just as food and medicine has to be taken and in the correct manner. One who merely studies a menu without taking any food will surely go hungry. In **the Āyacana Sutta** (S 6.1), the newly awakened Buddha reflected on his realization thus:

This Dharma that I have discovered is deep, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful, sublime, unattainable through discursive thought,<sup>246</sup> subtle, to be experienced by the wise.  
(S 6.1/1:136-138 = SD 12.2)

**3.9b Academic learning versus direct experience.** A similar sentiment is found in the two **Dhamma, vihārī Suttas** (A 5.73-74), where the Buddha defines “one who lives by the Dharma” (*dhamma, vihārī*). There are those who master the Dharma through study (*pariyāpuṇāti*), who teach (*deseti*) the Dharma, who recite (*sajjhāyam karoti*) the Dharma, and who think, examine and turn the Dharma over in his mind (*anuvitakketi anivācāreti manasānupekkhati*), but do not cultivate their mind in calm and wisdom.

“One who lives by the Dharma,” on the other hand, “does not pass the day (merely) in the study of the Dharma: he does not neglect seclusion, and applies himself to mental calm internally.”<sup>247</sup> Furthermore, “here a monk masters the Dharma through study...; moreover, he knows its meaning with wisdom.”<sup>248</sup> The juxtaposition of the two suttas—and their identical title—shows their close relationship. In fact, while the first sutta is about mental calm, the other is about insight wisdom, that is, the twin aspects of Buddhist meditation.<sup>249</sup> Academic scholars who are non-practitioners, not matter how erudite their studies and researches, can only at best explain the “letter” (*vyāñjana*) of the Dharma; its meaning (*attha*) can only be understood through personal experience of mental calm and insight through meditation, mindfulness and faith. **Analayo** sounds a sober cautionary note here:

The inability of a purely theoretical approach to result in awakening is a recurrent theme in the discourses.<sup>250</sup> To spend one’s time intellectually considering the *Dhamma* and thereby neglecting actual practice clearly meets with the Buddha’s disapproval. According to him, one who acts thus cannot be considered a practitioner of the *Dhamma*, but merely as someone caught up in thinking.<sup>251</sup>  
(2003:114)

**3.9c Pajānāti, sikkhati, paccavekkhati, upasamharati.** The discussion on “labelling” and “mental noting” concerns what one “does” during a satipaṭṭhana exercise. In this connection, there are two key verbs found in the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas, namely, *pajānāti*<sup>252</sup> and *sikkhati*. The first, *pajānāti*, denotes a passive yet thorough knowing—that is, a non-judgemental awareness<sup>253</sup>—in the first two tetrads of the breath, thus:

<sup>246</sup> *Atakkāvacaro* = *na + takka + avacara*, lit “not in the sphere of discursive thought (or logic)” (V 1:4 = D 2:36 = 37 = M 1:167 = S 1:136 ≠ M 1:487 ≠ 2:172; A 2:289; D 1:12; It 37).

<sup>247</sup> *So tāya dhamma, pariyattiyā na divasaṃ atināmeti, na riñcati paṭisallānaṃ, anuyūñjati ajjhataṃ ceto, -samathaṃ* (A 5.73/3:86 f).

<sup>248</sup> *Idha bhikkhu dhammaṃ pariyāpuṇāti...uttariṇ c’assa paññāya atthaṃ pajānāti* (A 5.74/3:88 f).

<sup>249</sup> In the modern “Vipassanā” tradition, this would be called “calm” (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) respectively. Cf A:ÑB §103 & p298 n24.

<sup>250</sup> At S 1:136 [**Āyacana S**, see §3.9a above = SD 12.2], the Buddha described his realization as beyond the reach of mere theoretical inquiry. Cf also Dh 19, 20, 258, 259, which emphasize that what really matters is the practice of the *Dhamma*. At A 5:162 [**Aññādhikaraṇa S**, A 10.86 = SD 12.15], excessive emphasis on a theoretical understanding of the *Dhamma* even led some monks to mistakenly claim realization. Cf also WS Karunaratne 1988a:83. (Analayo’s fn)

<sup>251</sup> A 3:87 [**Dhamma, vihārī S 1**, A 5.73]. The same description, however, comes up at A 3:178 [**Saddhamma Sammosa S 2**, A 5.156] in a recommendation to reflect on the *Dhamma*, demonstrating that the Buddha did not categorically reject such theoretical inquiry, but that his criticism was directed against neglect of the practice. [Analayo’s fn]

<sup>252</sup> *Pajānāti* is resolved as *pa + jānāti*. As already noted [3.6a], the prefix *pa* denotes direction, meaning “forth, forward, out,” or intensity, meaning “up, out, about, entirely.”

<sup>253</sup> Another Pali word that refers to “noting” or “labelling” is probably *paṭivijjhati*; see **Upakkilesa S** (M 128) in §3.1(6) above.

- (1) Breathing in long, he knows: ‘I breathe in long [Long in-breath],’  
Or, breathing out long, he knows: ‘I breathe out long [Long out-breath],’
- (2) Or, breathing in short, he knows: ‘I breathe in short [Short in-breath],’  
Or, breathing out short, he knows: ‘I breathe out short [Short out-breath],’ ... [sutta 2cd]

Here, I have given the alternative renditions [with square brackets] of these important sentences of the first 2 (“noting”) tetrads to reflect a “bare noting” (denoted by *pajānati*) that should occur in meditation whose focus is not grammatically complete sentences, unlike the “training” tetrads (each of which ends with *sikkhati*). Of this stage of the breath meditation, **Brahmavaṃso** says,

As one relaxes and settles down, the breath becomes short by itself. When the body is relaxing, you don’t need as much oxygen to give the body energy. So it’s quite natural that these two steps usually follow one after the other. The whole point of these two steps [long breaths, short breaths] is just to experience the breath instead of attending to many things. What you’re doing is to focus on one thing. (“The Beautiful Breath,” 1999)

I have given the alternative renditions of these important sentences of the first two sentences of the 16 steps of breath meditation, that is, the first tetrad, as “knowing” (or “noting”) to reflect a “he knows” or “he is aware in a non-judging manner” (*pajānati*), and in short statements rather than complete sentences. In fact, mental verbalization (“head talk”) should be dispensed with once one is able to watch the breathing process: one simply *knows* one is breathing. There is no need for full grammatical sentences while one is in meditation.

In the rest of the tetrads, a little more effort is needed, as it were, that is in regards to the “train-  
ing” tetrads (each of which ends with *sikkhati*). Here, the sentence, “he trains himself” (*sikkhati*) indicates a greater degree of difficulty, needing additional effort from the meditator. This difficulty is mainly due to the need for greater awareness that includes phenomena other than the breath.<sup>254</sup> In this connection, there two other verbs we need to note: “he reviews” (*paccavekkhati*) in the perception of foulness (M 10.10) and in the analysis of the four elements (M 10.12); and “he compares” (*upasaṃh-  
arati*) in nine charnel-ground contemplations (M 10.14 etc). This change in the choice of verbs indicates a shift from relatively simple acts of observing to more sophisticated degree of analysis.<sup>255</sup>

The “knowing” aspect underlies all satipaṭṭhana exercises: the other verbs only add on to the basic “knowing” due to the more complicated nature of the object. This “knowing” and related actions all relate directly to the attaining of focus and insight. In the popular “Vipassanā” method started in Burma, this is known as “**labelling**” [3.9a], the meditator merely makes a mental note of what is going on at the six sense-doors. The main problem with “labelling” is that it is done with mental verbalization (“head talk”). The proper way is simply to watch without comment, a “knowing without words.” Commenting on certain innovative teachings in the name of Abhidhamma, **Sujato** graphically instructs:

So while the Buddha spoke of the mind “changing while it stands,” the Abhidhamma just speaks of “standing.” It is much easier to define a static entity than a process evolving over time. This is why a butterfly collector wants to have his butterflies dead, with a pin stuck through their heart and a little label underneath, not madly meandering about in the woods. The dead mind. But the Buddha was not a butterfly collector, he was an observer of nature. He wanted us to watch the flight and flutter of the butterfly, to understand how it behaves in its natural environment, and to follow it gently, delicately, quietly until it settles down to rest and be still according to its nature—which he called “samadhi.” (Sujato, TMA:7, digital ed)<sup>256</sup>

**3.9d What does *parimukha* mean?**<sup>257</sup> There are two applications of the term *parimukha* in the **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 62) which helps in the understanding its usage: the first is when Rāhula decides to meditate immediately after receiving instructions from the Buddha himself (M

<sup>254</sup> Analayo 2003:130.

<sup>255</sup> Analayo 2003:119.

<sup>256</sup> See D 22.2A/2:291; M 10.4A/1:56. For a differing opinion, see Analayo [3.9a] above.

<sup>257</sup> See also **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118/3:78-88) = SD 7.13 Introd (2).

62.4),<sup>258</sup> the second is when the Buddha instructs him on the breath meditation (M 62.25).<sup>259</sup> On both occasions, the phrase used is “having established mindfulness before him,”<sup>260</sup> *parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhapetvā*, where *parimukhaṃ*, literally means “around the mouth,” but idiomatically means “in front.”<sup>261</sup>

In connection with the breath meditation taught in the Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta (M 62.24) and in the **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118),<sup>262</sup> however, the **Paṭisambhidā,magga** and the **Vibhaṅga** explain it as “at the tip of the nose or at the centre of the upper lip” as the proper location for the mindfulness of breathing.<sup>263</sup> This explanation is supported by the Āgama version of the Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta, where the **Ekottara Āgama** discourse explicitly speaks of “keeping the mind at the tip of the nose.”<sup>264</sup> However, in the standard description of sitting meditation found in other Ekōttara Āgama discourses do not speak of the nose-tip, but consistently speak of putting mindfulness “in the front.”<sup>265</sup>

In the first appearance of *parimukhaṃ* in the **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta**, when Rāhula sits down after receiving instructions from the Buddha on the five aggregates (M 62.4), the sense is clearly that of simply establishing mindfulness although the actual meditation is not mentioned.

In this context, the injunction to keep mindfulness “in front” would however seem to have a different meaning, since contemplation of the five aggregates does not bear any apparent relation to the tip of the nose, all the more since Rāhula at this junction of events seems to have been new to the practice of mindfulness of breathing, as he still had to be given instructions on it. As after being encouraged by Sāriputta to practice mindfulness of breathing Rāhula requested the Buddha to teach him how to put into practice, it seems as if at the time when he undertook contemplation of the five aggregates he had not yet been taught how to practice mindfulness of breathing. This makes it even more improbable that he would have directed his attention to the nose tip. The Ekottara Āgama version of this instance does in fact not mention the nose tip, but rather speaks simply of establishing unification of the mind.<sup>266</sup>

(Analayo 2005 at M 1:425 n37)

As such, **Analayo** concludes,

This suggests that the instruction to keep the mind at the tip of the nose in the Chinese parallel to the Mahārāhulovāda Sutta may not be a translation of what in its Indic original corresponded to *parimukha*, but could rather be an explanatory gloss on the practice of mindfulness of breathing, a gloss found also in the work that contains what probably are the historically earliest parts of the Pāli Abhidhamma, the **Vibhaṅga**.  
(2005 at M 1:425)

**3.9e Where to watch the breath?** In the section on breath meditation, there is the term *parimukha* [4], which literally means “around the mouth,”<sup>267</sup> here always used idiomatically and as an

<sup>258</sup> M 62.4/1:421 = SD 3.11.

<sup>259</sup> M 62.25/1:425 = SD 3.11.

<sup>260</sup> This tr may be adjusted to fit the context: at §25, it is rendered as “establishes mindfulness before him.”

<sup>261</sup> So U Thittila (Vbh:T 319, 328), Walshe (D:W 1995:335), Soma Thera (1998:42 f digital ed), and Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (M:ÑB 2001:527).

<sup>262</sup> M 118.17/3:82 = SD 7.13.

<sup>263</sup> Pm 1:171, 19; Vbh 252,13 = §537. For further discussion, see **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118) = SD 7.13 Introd (2) & **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M 10) = SD 13 Introd (3.9d).

<sup>264</sup> EĀ 17.1 = T2.582a15: 繫意鼻頭.

<sup>265</sup> Eg in EĀ 37.3 = T2.711c19: 念在前, corresponding to *parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhapetvā* in its Pali parallel M 32.17 = 1:219,30. The same expression 念在前 as part of the standard description of sitting down for meditation occurs over 30 times in the Ekottara Āgama alone. In contrast, the expression to keep the mind at the nose tip, 繫意鼻頭, does not seem to recur anywhere else in the Ekottara Āgama or in the other three Āgamas. (Analayo, 2005 at M 1:425). In connection with the Chinese texts instructing one to keep the mind at the nose-tip and similar remarks, **Erik Zürcher** explains that the early Chinese translators “during the work of translation ... gave oral explanations. ... concerning the contents of the scriptures translated. Explanations of this kind often appear to have crept into the text.” (1991:277-300).

<sup>266</sup> EĀ 17.1 = T2.582a12: 專精一心.

<sup>267</sup> MA 2:216; DA 1:210; SA 1:238. See **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118) = SD 7.13 esp Introd (2).



adverb, meaning “in front.”<sup>268</sup> **The Vibhaṅga** explains it as “at the tip of the nose or at the centre of the upper lip” (Vbh 252=§537). This is the tradition generally followed by the modern Vipassana tradition.

There is also other late canonical and commentarial similes that seem to support this interpretation—that the breath should be watched at the nose-tip or “around the mouth.” In the well known simile of sawing: the meditator watches the breath (or the meditation-object) at its “source” just as a carpenter, when sawing wood, would carefully watch the sawing point and not the saw.<sup>269</sup> **The Visuddhi-magga** gives two other similes: “the cripple” who sits pushing a swing and watching its front, middle and end as it rocks,<sup>270</sup> and “the gate-keeper” who watches only those at the gate and not those inside or outside.<sup>271</sup> However, such similes are rather broad and can be taken to refer to watching the breath itself rather than the location of the breath.

The oldest texts simply teach simply watching “the breath” itself (whether it is present or not, long or short, etc), but the Abhidhamma and Commentaries introduced the watching of the “point of breath.”

Often people are told when meditating to watch the breath at the tip of the nose, but actually many people find this is a distraction. If you look at the suttas, the Buddha never tells us to watch the breath in a physical place. He says to know that you are breathing in and to know that you are breathing out. The important thing is to note it in time. So: “Am I breathing in at this time, or am I breathing out at this time?” (Nyanadhammo, “The Spiritual Faculties” 1999:3)

As has already been noted above [3.9a], in the discussion of the third key term of the insight refrain—“**Maintaining the mindfulness of a ‘body’ merely for knowing and awareness**”—concepts and language are useful in the preliminary stages to help one focus mentally and remove mental hindrances. In due course, on higher levels of satipaṭṭhana practice, such props (as mental noting) have to be removed so that the true beauty of the calm and clear can be better appreciated, and that one would be spiritually liberated in due course.

**3.9f What is the breath?**<sup>272</sup> The usual Sanskrit word for “breath” is *prāṇa*, while Pali has *āna* and *apāṇa*. The Sanskrit cognate of *ānāpāna*<sup>273</sup> is *prāṇāpāna*, resolved as *prāṇa* and *apāṇa*. The Sanskrit *prāṇa* is also the cognate of the Pali *pāṇa*, more commonly translated as “breath (as life),” that is the “life-force.” For example, the term *pāṇātipātā*<sup>274</sup> is the technical term for “killing” as found in the first of the lay precepts (*sikkhāpada*, *sīla*).<sup>275</sup> Its Greek cognate is *pneuma*, from which we get “pneumatic,” “pneumonia,” etc. Another Indian word for breath is *āna*, as found in the dvandva *ānāpāna*, usually rendered as “in and out breath,” sometimes used interchangeably as “out and in breath.” The word *ānā* has the Latin cognate of *anima* (breath, soul) as in found such English words as “animal,” “animated,” etc.<sup>276</sup>

The third step of the first tetrad of the breath meditation sequence reads “**Experiencing the whole body (of breath)**” (*sabba, kāya, paṭisaṃvedī*) [sutta 2c(3)]. The Majjhima Commentary glosses *sabba, kāya* as “the whole body of breath,” that is, its three phases of each in-breath and out-breath through its three phases of beginning, middle and end (Brahmavamso, 2002:60). Brahmavamso keeps to this tradition, teaching that “you have just the target in your mind—just the breath and nothing else...the full attention on the breath” (“Beautiful Breath,” 1999).

<sup>268</sup> So U Thittila (Vbh:T 319, 328), Walshe (D:W 1995:335), Soma Thera (1998:42 f digital ed), and Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi (M:ÑB 2001:527).

<sup>269</sup> Pm 1:170-172; qu at Vism 8.201-203/281 f.

<sup>270</sup> Vism 198 f/290 f.

<sup>271</sup> Vism 200/281.

<sup>272</sup> See **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118/3:78-88) = SD 7.13 Introd (1e).

<sup>273</sup> VII *ānāpāna*, *ānāpāna*, *ānāpāna*.

<sup>274</sup> Resolved as *pāṇa* (breath, life) + *atipātā*, lit “letting fall by way of transgression,” ie “destruction”; the prefix *ati* has the sense of “transgression” (CPD sv). See also PED: *pāṇa*.

<sup>275</sup> V 1:83, 83, 193; d 3:68, 70, 149, 182, 235; M 1:361, 3:23; S 2:167 (*pāṇātipātī*); Sn 242; It 63; J 3:181; Pug 39 f.

<sup>276</sup> See **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118) = SD 7.13 Introd (1cd).

You see it from the very start when it originates out of the silence, and you see it grow to its peak and then fade away again, until the in-breath has completely subsided. You have such a degree of clarity that you even see that space between the breaths. The in-breath has stopped, the out-breath has yet to arise. There's a pause there. Then the out-breath begins to grow to its peak and then fade away into nothingness again. That's what we call **the whole of the breath**.  
(Brahmavamso 2002:60)

However, Thich Nhat Hanh (1990:6, 46-49) and especially Bodhi (2001 n141) take *sabba,kāya* to mean "the whole physical body."<sup>277</sup> According to transpersonal psychology (especially bodywork and breathwork), the whole *body* "breathes."<sup>278</sup>

**3.10 INDEPENDENCE.** Here, we shall discuss the last key term of the insight refrain (or expanded satipatthana formula): "**Dwelling independent and not clinging to the anything in this world**" (D 22.2e = M 10.5). Finally, the practitioner dwells "independent" or "unattached" (*anissita*), and does not cling to anything in the world (*na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*). It is possible, as Gethin observes,<sup>279</sup> that this last remark should be taken merely as a variation on the phrase "putting away covetousness and displeasure in the world."<sup>280</sup> The Commentary, however, appears to read much more into it than this, noting that the insight refrain describes "the entrance to liberation as far as arhathood" (*yāva arahattā niyyāna, mukham*),<sup>281</sup> and in this connection—referring to the 21 instances of the insight refrain—describes the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as "the teaching that is taught culminating in arhathood in twenty-one places (*eka, vīsatiya thānesu arahatta, nikūṭena desitā desanā*)."<sup>282</sup>

A number of scholars have noticed the similarities between the satipatthana as taught by our Buddha, Sakyamuni, and the awakening of the past Buddha, Vipassī. **Gethin** notes that "[t]he language of the second and fourth parts of the insight formula seems to echo other Nikāya passages with particular connotation,"<sup>283</sup> and goes on to quote the passage on Vipassī's awakening as recorded in **the Mahā'-padāna Sutta** (D 18).<sup>284</sup> **Analayo**, in his classic study of satipatthana, notes the philosophical and spiritual affinity between impermanence and conditionality,<sup>285</sup> how these "same two aspects [impermanence and conditionality] contributed to the realization of the previous Buddha, Vipassī, when after a detailed examination of dependent co-arising (*paṭicca samupāda*), *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplation of the impermanent nature of the five aggregates led to his awakening." The Mahā'padāna Sutta passage on Vipassī's awakening runs thus:

And then, bhikkhus, after some time the bodhisattva Vipassī dwelled watching arising and passing away with regard to the five aggregates of clinging:

Thus is form, thus is the arising of form, thus is the passing away of form.

Thus is feeling, thus is the arising of feeling, thus is the passing away of feeling.

Thus is perception, thus is the arising of perception, thus is the passing away of perception.

Thus are mental formations, thus is the arising of mental formations, thus is the passing away of mental formations.

Thus is consciousness, thus is the arising of consciousness, thus is the passing away of consciousness.

And as he dwelled watching arising and passing away with regard to the five aggregates of clinging, his mind was soon freed from the cankers (*āsava*) through not clinging.<sup>286</sup>

<sup>277</sup> Cf the remark that the in-and-out-breathing is "a body among the bodies" (§24).

<sup>278</sup> For the simile of the teacher and his three archer students illustrating the experience of the total breath, see Brahmavamso 2002:62 f. For a useful discussion, see Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, 2003:131 f.

<sup>279</sup> Gethin 2001:55.

<sup>280</sup> D 22.1c/2:290; M 10.3/1:56.

<sup>281</sup> DA 3:766; MA 1:250, 270, 274, 280.

<sup>282</sup> DA 3:806; MA 1:302.

<sup>283</sup> Gethin 2001:55 f.

<sup>284</sup> D 14.22/2:35.

<sup>285</sup> Analayo 2003:106 f. He substantially discusses the relationship of **dependent arising** (*paṭicca, samuppāda*) with impermanence here, 2003:107-112.

<sup>286</sup> *Atha kho bhikkhave Vipassī bodhisatto aparena samayena pañcas'upādāna-k, khandhesu udaya, vyayā-nupassī vihāsi: iti rūpaṃ iti, iti rūpassa samudayo, iti rūpassa attha, gamo; iti vedanā, iti vedanāya samudayo, iti vedanāya attha, gamo; iti saññā, iti saññāya samudayo, iti saññāya attha, gamo; iti saṅkhārā, iti saṅkhārānaṃ*

(D 18.2.22/2:35)

Let us return to the refrain, “Dwelling independent and not clinging to the anything in this world.” It import is clear, as **Analayo** points out:

enhancing mindfulness and understanding points to an important shift away from goal-oriented practice. At this comparatively advanced stage, *satipaṭṭhāna* is practised for its own sake. With this shift in attitude, the goal and the act of meditation begin to merge into one, since awareness and understanding are cultivated for the sake of developing ever more awareness and understanding. The practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* becomes an “effortless effort,” so to speak, divested of goal-orientation and expectation...

By letting go of all dependencies and cravings during this advanced level of practice, a deepening realization of the empty nature of all phenomena dawns on the meditator. With this state of independence and equipoise, characterized by the absence of any sense of “I or “mine,” the direct path of *satipaṭṭhāna* gradually approaches its culmination. It is in this balanced state of mind, free from “I”-making or “my”-making, that the realization of *Nibbāna* can take place. (Analayo 2003:115, 116)

Fortunately, the **Dhātu Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 140) defines the phrase, *na kiñci loke upādiyati*, thus:

He neither constructs mental formations<sup>287</sup> nor thinks in terms of being and non-being.<sup>288</sup>  
Since he neither mentally constructs nor thinks in terms of being and non-being, he does not cling to anything in this world. (M 140.22b/3:244) = SD 4.17

In the Dhātu Vibhaṅga Sutta, it is clear that this statement is made in reference to Pukkusāti, a non-returner, that is, a saint of the path. In this case, the letting-go is a spontaneous and permanent one. However, it is clear from the context of satipaṭṭhāna practice, one is training oneself to make every effort to let go of negative mental states and cultivate wholesome ones, and in due course go beyond both.

For the truth is not “out there” but in here, in oneself. As a Tibetan saying goes, seeking happiness outside of ourselves is like waiting for sunshine into a north-facing cave.

## 4 Psychology of *satipaṭṭhāna*

**4.1a The four perversions (*vipallāsa*).** A key factor contributing to our continued or repeated experience of suffering and unsatisfactoriness is that we often *forget* our experiences of reality, either through our perceptions (*saññā*), our consciousness (*citta*), or our views (*diṭṭhi*).<sup>289</sup> As a result, we tend to regard what is impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent, what is painful (*dukkha*) as pleasant or bringing happiness, what is without an abiding self (*anattā*) as a self, what is foul or ugly (*asubha*) as pure or beautiful (**Vipallāsa Sutta**, A 4.49).<sup>290</sup> In the connection, the **Netti-p, pakaraṇa** says:<sup>291</sup>

---

*samudayo, iti saṅkhārānam attha, gamo; iti viññānam, iti viññānassa samudayo, iti viññānānam attha, gamo. Tassa pañcas 'upādāna-k, khandesu udaya, vyayānupassino viharato na cirass 'eva anupādāya āsavehi cittaṃ vimucci.*

<sup>287</sup> “He neither constructs mental formations,” *So n'eva abhisankharoti*, lit “he does not construct” but the English here is transitive (needs an object). See foll n.

<sup>288</sup> “Nor thinks in terms of being and non-being,” *nābhisañcetaṃ bhavāya va vibhavāya*. The verbs *abhisankharoti* (constructs) and *abhisañcetaṃ* (thinks out, plans)—both being connoted by the term *papañceti* (he mentally proliferates)—denotes the willful process of constructing and generating thoughts and opinions that fuels the continuation of conditioned existence. Ceasing the thought for either being or non-being—also tr as “growth” and “decline” respectively (MA 5:57)—shows the ending of craving for eternal existence (due to eternity view, *sassata, vāda*) and annihilation (due to annihilationism, *uccheda, vāda*), leading to the attainment of arhathood. For further discussion, see **Kaccā(ya)na, gotta S** (S 12.15/2:16 f) = SD 6.13.

<sup>289</sup> Cf DA 2:555 = SA 3:252.

<sup>290</sup> A 4.49/2:52 = SD 16.11; Vism 22.68/685. See Ledi Sayadaw, (1) *The Manuals of Buddhism*, 1965:1 f; (2) *Manual of Insight*, BPS Wheel series p5.

<sup>291</sup> It should be noted that this *vipallāsa* set occurs only once in all the 4 Nikāyas (at A 4.49, as noted). The term however occurs in different senses elsewhere: as “disturbance” in **Vinaya** (V 3:7, “derangement,” V:H 1:14), and as “change” in **Sutta Nipāta** (Sn 299), and simply referred to as *catu-b, bipallāsa* in **Thera.gāthā**

One who dwells watching the body with regard to body abandons the perversion *that there is beauty in the ugly...*

One who dwells watching feelings with regard to feelings abandons the perversion *that there is pleasure in the painful...*

One who dwells watching the mind with regard to mind abandons the perversion *that there is permanence in the impermanent...*

One who dwells watching dharmas with regard to dharmas abandons the perversion *that there is self in what is not-self.*

(Nett 484-488/83 f; cf MA 1:239, Peṭk 103, Vism 22.34/678 f, Abhidharmakośa, bhaṣya 342)<sup>292</sup>

What we have here are in fact the four focusses of mindfulness and how they eliminate each of **the four perversions**, respectively:

Satipaṭṭhana

the observing of the body  
the observing of feelings  
the observing of the mind  
the observing of dharmas

Perversion eliminated

the perversion of seeing the beautiful in the ugly  
the perversion of seeing pleasure in painful  
the perversion of seeing the permanent in the impermanent  
the perversion of seeing a self in what is not self

**4.1b The five aggregates.** Buddhaghosa attempts to show the connection of the four focusses of mindfulness to the five aggregates (*pañca-k, khandha*) as follows:

the observing of the body  
the observing of feelings  
the observing of the mind  
the observing of dharmas

the aggregate of form (*rūpa-k, khandha*);  
the aggregate of feelings (*vedanā-k, khandha*);  
the aggregate of consciousness (*viññāṇa-k, khandha*);  
the aggregates of perception (*saññā-k, khandha*) and of mental formations (*saṅkhāra-k, khandha*). (MA 1:281)<sup>293</sup>

**Analayo**, in *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*, however, sounds a cautionary note:

On closer inspection, this correlation appears a little forced, since the third satipaṭṭhāna, contemplation of the mind, corresponds to all mental aggregates and not only to consciousness. Moreover, the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of *dharmas*, includes the entire set of the five aggregates as one of its meditations, and thus has a wider range than just the two aggregates of cognition (*saññā*) and volition (*saṅkhārā*).

Nevertheless, what the commentaries might intend to indicate is that all aspects of one's subjective experience are to be investigated with the aid of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*. Understood in this way, the division into four *satipaṭṭhānas* represents an analytical approach similar to a division of subjective experience into the five aggregates. (2003:24)

Analayo goes on to say that the idea was to regard all one's subjective experiences simply as objects without a solid "I," which corresponds well with the Buddha's instruction to investigate each aggregate thoroughly to the point where no "I" is found (S 4:197).<sup>294</sup>

(Tha 1143). The 4 perversions form part of a def of ignorance in Patañjali's *Yoga Śūtra* (2.5). See Analayo 2003:25 n27.

<sup>292</sup> Gethin's tr; see 2001:42; Analayo notes that these "4 perversions" are listed only once in the 4 Nikāyas at **A 2:52**. At **V 3:7** it occurs in the sense of "disturbance"; at **Sn 299** in the sense of "change"; at **Tha 1143** as *catu-b, bipallāsā*. The 4 perversions became prominent particularly in Pm and in later Pāli literature. These four perversions form part of the a def of ignorance in Patañjali's *Yoga Śūtra* 2.5 (2001:24-26).

<sup>293</sup> For detailed discussion, see Gethin 2001: 29-68 (ch 1); see esp 45 f, also 306.

<sup>294</sup> Cf M Fryba, who proposes employing the 4 satipaṭṭhanas as labelling categories for such analytical dissolution of subjective experience by classifying experiences of warmth, movement, trembling, itching, pressure, lightness, etc, under "body"; being pleased, amused, bored, sad, etc, under "feelings"; being concentrated, scattered, tense, greedy, hateful, etc, under "mind"; and thinking, wishing, planning, intending, etc, under "dharmas" (1989:258).

**4.1c Personality types.** The Majjhima Commentary further relates the four satipatthanas to personality types, and recommends each of the satipatthanas for a specific personality type, that is, practising the satipatthana according to the needs of one's character or inclination. Accordingly, the contemplations of the body and of feeling should be the main practice for those whose habitual tendency towards craving is strong (*taṇhā, carita*), while those with the habitual tendency of intellectual speculation (*diṭṭhi, carita*) should put more effort into the practice of observing mind or dharmas; and each pair is further categorized into the keen-witted or "quick" (*tikkha*) and the dull-witted or "slow" (*manda*).<sup>295</sup>

	Body	Feelings	Mind	Dharmas
Aggregate	physical form	feeling	consciousness	perception & formations
Personality	slow craver	quick craver	slow speculator	quick speculator
Insight	foulness	unsatisfactoriness	impermanence	not-self

← affective inclination →                      ← cognitive inclination →

Fig 4.1 Correlations for the four satipatthanas (after Analayo 2003:25)

**Analayo** adds this comment:

Understood in this way, practice of the first two *satipaṭṭhānas* suits those with a more affective inclination, while the last two are recommended for those of a more cognitive orientation. In both cases, those whose character is to think and react quickly can profitably centre their practice on the relatively subtler contemplations of feeling or dharmas, while those whose mental faculties are more circumspect and measured will have better results if they base their practice on the grosser objects of body or mind. Although these recommendations are expressed in terms of character type, they could also be applied to one's momentary disposition: one could choose that *satipaṭṭhāna* that best corresponds to one's state of mind, so that when one feels sluggish and desirous, for example, contemplation of the body would be the appropriate practice to be undertaken. (2003:25)

**4.2 OVERCOMING MENTAL HINDRANCES.** Here we will examine the important phrase, *viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassaṃ*, "he dwells (*viharati*) exertive [ardent], clearly aware, mindful,<sup>296</sup> (observing the body in the body, ... dharmas in the dharmas), putting away covetousness and displeasure for the world"<sup>297</sup> [4]. As **the Netti-p, pakaraṇa** points out, four of the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) are present in the formula:

*ātāpī*, that is to say, the faculty of effort [energy];  
*sampajāno*, that is to say, the faculty of wisdom;  
*satimā*, that is to say, the faculty of mindfulness;  
*vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassaṃ*, that is, the faculty of samadhi. (Nett §481 f/82 f)

The whole phrase is essentially synonymous with *vigatābhijjho vigata, vyāpādo asammūḷho sampajāno patissato* mentioned in connection with the four divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) in **the Kesaputtīyā Sutta**.<sup>298</sup> Their applications, however, differ: the former points to the *result* of meditation, while the latter is a *part* of the meditation process itself.

**4.2a ātāpī.** Here, "exertive" or "ardent" (*ātāpī*), as noted above, connotes effort (*vīriya*), that is,

<sup>295</sup> DA 3:753 f = MA 1:239 f; cf SnA 544. For a more detailed treatment of **character analysis**, see Vism 3.74-103/101-110.

<sup>296</sup> "Exertive, clearly aware, mindful," *ātāpī sampajāno satimā* (D 3:58, 77, 141, 211, 276 = M 1:56 ff (MA 1:243), 2:11 = S 5:141-143 (SA 3:180) = A 4:300, 457 = Pm 41 (PmA 175) = Vbh 193 f (VbhA 219 f). These stock terms are def at Vbh 194, 196 = 202; Vism 3; DA 363; MA 1:244; SA 1:204; AA 2:42; ItA 1;105; SnA 157; ApA 310.

<sup>297</sup> *Tasmā-t-īha taṃ bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassaṃ.*

<sup>298</sup> A 3.65.15/1:192 = SD 35.4.

right effort (*samma-p, padhāna*), namely, (1) preventing negative states (*samvara, padhāna*); (2) overcoming them (*pahāna, padhāna*); (3) cultivating wholesome states (*bhāvanā, padhāna*); (4) maintaining them (*anurakkhanā, padhāna*) (A 2:74, 15 f).

**4.2b sampajāno satimā.** Here, “clearly aware” (*sampajāno*) [3.6] refers to incipient wisdom (*paññā*). The Visuddhi, magga explains that **clear awareness** (*sampajañña*) has the characteristic of non-confusion; its function is to investigate and is manifested as scrutiny. **Mindfulness** (*sati*) [3.1b] has the characteristic of remembering. Its function is not to forget and is manifested as guarding. (Vism 4.172/163)<sup>299</sup>

**4.2c vineyya.** This word can mean “should remove” (as a potential, like *vineyya*, Sn 590)<sup>300</sup> or as “having removed” (as a gerund, like *vinayitvā*, Pm 1:244), and both senses apply in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. We will examine each of these two usages. Using the first sense of *vineyya* to the passage, *idha bhikkhave bhikkhu* *⟨kāye kāyānupassī... vedanāsu vedanā'nupassī... citte cittānupassī... dhammesu dhammānupassī⟩ viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassam*, it may be construed that only after “having removed” (*vineyya*) covetousness and displeasure (ie the five hindrances)<sup>301</sup>—that is, one “should have removed” them first—one goes on to practise the focusses of mindfulness. [4.3, 5D.5]

According to Buddhaghosa, the term *vineyya* refers either to “displacement by opposites”<sup>302</sup> (*tad-aṅga vinaya*) or to “removal by suppression” (*vikkhambhana vinaya*),<sup>303</sup> which are presumably the same respectively as “the abandoning by opposites” (*tad-aṅga pahāna*), that is, a temporary removal by deliberate restraint or by insight, and as “the abandoning by suppression” (*vikkhambhana pahāna*), that is, a temporary removal by the attainment of dhyanas. **The Visuddhi, magga** give a general explanation:

*Vikkhambhana-p, pahāna* is “the suppressing of unwholesome states such as the hindrances by any kind of ordinary concentration.” (Vism 22.111/693)

*Tad-aṅga-p, pahāna* is then abandoning of any state that is to be abandoned by means of whatever factor of knowledge and of insight that is its opposite. (Vism 22.112/693 f)

**The Paṭisambhida, magga** is more instructive:

For one developing the first dhyana, there is abandoning of the hindrances by suppression (*vikkhambhana pahāna*); for one developing concentration that partakes of penetration, there is the abandoning of views by displacement [the substitution of opposites] (*tad-aṅga pahāna*).” (Pm 1:27)<sup>304</sup>

Both these texts mention altogether **five types of abandoning** (*pahāna*), also called liberation (*vimutti*), cessation (*nirodha*), seclusion (*viveka*),<sup>305</sup> detachment (*virāga*), or relinquishing [release] (*vossagga*), namely:

- |                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (1) Abandoning by suppression  | ( <i>vikkhambhana pahāna</i> ); |
| (2) Abandoning by displacement | ( <i>tad-aṅga pahāna</i> );     |
| (3) Abandoning by cutting off  | ( <i>samuccheda pahāna</i> );   |

<sup>299</sup> See M:ÑB 2001 n147) & also Gethin 2001:47-53, 138-140. For other details, see §3.6 above.

<sup>300</sup> At Sn 58 *vineyya* is taken as a gerund, but at Nc 577b taken as potential.

<sup>301</sup> The 5 mental hindrances (*pañca, nīvaraṇa*) are: sense-desire (*kāma-c, chanda*), ill will (*vyāpāda*)—both mentioned in Satipaṭṭhāna Ss as “covetousness and discontent” (*abhijjhā, domanassa*) [4.3e]. sloth and torpor (*thīna, middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca, kukkuccha*), and persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*). See (**Nīvaraṇā**) **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55) = SD 3.12.

<sup>302</sup> Or, “the removal by the substitution of opposites.”

<sup>303</sup> *Tattha vineyyā ti tad-aṅga, vinayena vā vikkhambhana, vinayena vā vinayitvā*, “having removed: having removed by removal by way of (displacing) a particular respect or by removal through suppression.” (DA 3:758 = MA 1:243 = SA 3:180 = VbhA 220 = Pm 1:176 = NettA:Be 97; cf SnA 1:365: *vineyyā ti vinetvā*).

<sup>304</sup> *Vikkhambhana-p, pahānaṅ ca nīvaraṇaṅ paṭhama-j, jhānaṅ bhāvayato, tad-aṅga-p, pahānaṅ ca diṭṭhi, gatānaṅ nibbedha, bhāgiyaṅ samādhiṅ bhāvayato* (Pm 1:27).

<sup>305</sup> “Seclusion” (*viveka*) is the first factor of the *viveka, nissita* formula, that reflects the purpose of the awakening factors (*bojjhaṅga*): see **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118.42(i)) = SD 7.13.42 nn.

- (4) Abandoning by stilling (*paṭipassaddhi pahāna*); and  
 (5) Abandoning by escape (*nissaraṇa pahāna*).

(Pm 1:27, 2:219-224; Vism 13.12/410, 22.110/693; UA 32 f = UA:M 57 f)

The “abandoning by cutting off” (*samuccheda pahāna*) is defined as operating “for one who develops the supramundane path that leads to the destruction of the cankers,”<sup>306</sup> and consists in “the abandoning of states that are fetters, etc, by means of the knowledge of the noble path, such that they do not occur again.”<sup>307</sup>

Thus the basic point of contrast is that this last form of abandoning abandons defilements finally and absolutely, for once and for all, while the two preceding kinds of abandoning abandons defilements only temporarily—principally in meditation, be it calm (*samatha*) or insight (*vipassanā*).  
 (Gethin 2001:49; cf 166-168)

The “abandoning by stilling [tranquillization]” (*paṭipassaddhi pahāna*) occurs at the moment of fruition; and the “abandoning by escape” (*nissaraṇa pahāna*) is the cessation that is nirvana.<sup>308</sup>

TRANSLATION OF *VINEYYA*. Let us now return to our discussion on *vineyya*. As pointed by **Ana-layo**, although *vineyya* is best translated as “having removed” or “having removed,” this does not necessarily imply that desire and discontent (*abhijjhā, domanassa*) must be removed before practising the focusses of mindfulness. It can also mean that this the removal of *abhijjhā, domanassa* takes place simultaneously with the practice:

Generally speaking, the form *vineyya* can be either a gerund: “having removed” (this is how the commentary understands it, cf Pm 1:244: *vinayitvā*, or else 3<sup>rd</sup> sing potential: “one should remove” (as eg at Sn 590; cf also Woodward 1980, 4:142 n3 [S 4:142]). However, in the present context to take *vineyya* as a potential form is not acceptable, as then the sentence would have two finite verbs in different moods (*viharati* + *vineyya*). Usually the gerund form does imply an action preceding the action of the main verb, which in the present case would mean that the removal has to be completed prior to the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*. However, in some cases the gerund can also represent an action occurring concurrently with the action denoted by the main verb. An example of a concurrent action expressed by the gerund is the standard description of the practice of loving kindness in the discourses (eg at M 1:38) where the “abiding” (*viharati*) and the “pervading” (*pharitvā*) are simultaneous activities, together describing the act of radiating loving kindness. The same type of construction occurs in relation to the attainment of absorption (eg at D 1:37), where the “abiding” (*viharati*) and the “attaining” (*upasampajja*) also take place simultaneously. In fact, several translators have rendered *vineyya* in such a way that it represents the outcome of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice...

(Analayo, 2003:68 n6)

In conclusion, the formula “a monk dwells (*viharati*) exertive [ardent], clearly aware, mindful,<sup>309</sup> observing the body in the body,... feelings in the feelings,... the mind in the mind,... dharmas in the dharmas, removing covetousness and displeasure for the world” [4]—whether *vineyya* is rendered in

<sup>306</sup> *Samuccheda-p.pahānañ ca lokuttara-khaya, gāmi, maggaṃ bhāvayato* (PM 1:27). “Cankers” or mental cankers (*āsava*), comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as influxes, taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untr. The Abhidhamma lists **4 cankers**: the canker of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijj’āsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of three cankers (omitting the canker of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: *āsava*.

<sup>307</sup> *Ariya, magga, ñāṇena saṃyojanādīnaṃ dhammānaṃ yathā na puna pavattanti* (Vism 22.122/696). Pm 1:27 also mentions a variety of subsidiary types of abandoning.

<sup>308</sup> Pm 1:27; Vism 13.12/410. See also Gethin 2001:162-168.

<sup>309</sup> “Exertive, clearly aware, mindful,” *ātāpī sampajāno satimā* (D 3:58, 77, 141, 211, 276 = M 1:56 ff (MA 1:243), 2:11 = S 5:141-143 (SA 3:180) = A 4:300, 457 = Pm 41 (PmA 175) = Vbh 193 f (VbhA 219 f). These stock terms are def at Vbh 194, 196 = 202; Vism 3; DA 363; MA 1:244; SA 1:204; AA 2:42; ItA 1;105; SnA 157; ApA 310.

the potential mood as “having removed” or as a gerund, “removing”—should be understood to be a gradual process: satipaṭṭhana is a progressive practice.<sup>310</sup> Or, as **Bodhi** puts it:

The phrase [*vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassaṃ*] need not be understood to mean that one must first abandon the hindrance before one starts to develop the four establishments of mindfulness. It would be sufficient to have temporarily suspended “covetousness and displeasure” through dedication to the practice itself. (S:B 1917 n124)

We shall continue this discussion below [4.3].

**4.2d loke, “in the world.”** As regards “the world” (*loka*), the **Vibhaṅga** says: “This very body is the world, and the five aggregates of clinging (ie form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness) are the world—this is called the world.”<sup>311</sup> However, in his amplified translation at Vbh 105, **U Thittila** has “world (ie, in ideational objects)” (*dhammā*, mental objects) (Vibh:T 139).<sup>312</sup> There are a number of suttas that deal with “the world” (*loka*) in this sense.<sup>313</sup>

**4.2e abhijjhā, domanassa.** The Commentaries on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta say that the dvandva, *abhijjhā, domanassa*, “covetousness and displeasure [discontent],”<sup>314</sup> signifies the first two hindrances (*nīvaraṇā*)—sensual desire and ill will—the principal hindrances to be overcome for the practice to succeed.<sup>315</sup> Although “covetousness and displeasure” is taken by the Sutta Commentaries to refer to only the first two mental hindrances in the early suttas, the dvandva is clearly a synecdoche (or short form) for all the five hindrances (*pañca, nīvaraṇā*) themselves, whose removal leads to mindfulness (*sati*), mental concentration (*samādhi*) and dhyana (*jhāna*). This notion is supported by **Buddhaghosa**, who says, “...omitting repetitions (regarding abandoning), that of lust is indicated by the first [*abhijjhā*], and that of the remaining hindrances by the second [*domanassa*].”<sup>316</sup>

In this well known stock passage, for example, we see “covetousness or discontent” mentioned as being “evil unwholesome states” (*pāpakā akusalā dhammā*):

Here, brahmin, on (seeing a **form** with the eye, ... cognizing a **mind-object** with the mind), a monk does not grasp at its signs or its details.<sup>317</sup> For, on account of dwelling without restraint over the eye-faculty, the evil unwholesome states of covetousness or discontent might assail him. (M 27.15/1:180 f = 33.7/1:221 = 33.19/1:223 = 38.35/1:269 = 39.8/1:273, etc)

Here, “evil unwholesome qualities of covetousness or discontent” refer to the five mental hindrances that are listed in full just a little later in the same text.

On *abhijjhā, domanassa*, there is an interesting related passage from the **Pubba or Pubb’eva Sambodha Sutta** (A 3.101) referring to its opposite, *sukha, somanassa* (physical and mental pleasure):

<sup>310</sup> See Gethin’s remark on satipaṭṭhana as a progressive practice, §§3.0; 5A.1 above.

<sup>311</sup> Vbh 195; DA 3:760 = MA 1:245, which qu Vbh 195.

<sup>312</sup> Gethin discusses this basic formula, 2001:47-53.

<sup>313</sup> See eg **Sabba S** (S 35.23), **Rohitassa S** (S 2.26), (**Lujjati**) **Loka S** (S 35.82), **Lokanta Gamana S** (S 35.116), (**Samuday’atthaṅgama**) **Loka S** (S 12.44) = SD 7.1-5 respectively.

<sup>314</sup> Analayo has “desire and discontent” (2003:3). See also Gethin 2001:49 f.

<sup>315</sup> DA 3:758 = MA 1:243; SA 3:272.

<sup>316</sup> *Agahita, gahanena pana paṭhamena kāma-c, chandassa, dutiyena sesa. nīvaraṇānaṃ* (Vism 4.87/141).

Elsewhere, he adds, “But here since taking *abhijjhā* includes *kāma-c, chanda*, and taking *domanassa* includes *vyāpāda*, therefore it should be understood that the abandoning of the hindrances is spoken of by indicating the pair that is strong among those items that make up the hindrances” (DA 3:759 = MA 1:244 = VbhA 220; Gethin’s tr 2001:49; and he adds: “The taking of *domanassa* includes *vyāpāda* because all *citta* rooted in aversion is accompanied by unpleasant mental feeling.)

<sup>317</sup> *Na nimitta-g, gāhī hoti nānuvyañjana-g, gāhī*, lit “he is not one who grasps at a sign, he is not one who grasps at a detail (feature).” Comys say that “**appearance**” (*nimitta*) here refers to a grasping arising through one’s sensual lust (*chanda, rāga, vasena*) or on account of one’s view (*diṭṭhi, matta, vasena*); “**feature**” (*anuvyañjana*) here refers to finding delight by grasping at another’s limb or body part (eyes, arms, legs, etc) (Nm 2:390; Nc 141, 141; DhsA 400, 402; cf MA 1:75, 4:195; SA 3:4, 394; Nc 1:55; DhA 1:74). On the meanings of *nimitta*, see SD 19.7.



Bhikshus, before my awakening, when I was still a bodhisattva, this thought occurred to me... “Whatever physical or mental pleasure (*sukha, somanassa*) there is in the world, *that* is the gratification (*assāda*) in the world; *that* the world is impermanent, suffering and of the nature to change, *that* is the wretchedness (*ādīnava*) in the world—the removal and abandoning of desire and lust for the world, *that* is the escape from the world.” (A 3.101/1:258)<sup>318</sup>

My own understanding here regarding the naming of the first two mental hindrances as *abhijjhā, domanassa* is to show that with their elimination the other hindrances are eliminated, too—a view confirmed by Brahmavamso.<sup>319</sup> This is further confirmed by the Commentaries:

But here since taking *abhijjhā* includes *kāma-c, chanda*, and taking *domanassa* includes *vyāpāda*, therefore it should be understood that the abandoning of the hindrances is spoken of by indicating the pair that is strong among those items that make up the hindrances.<sup>320</sup>

(DA 3:759 = MA 1:244 = VbhA 220)

Here Gethin adds a parenthetical note: “The taking of *domanassa* includes *vyāpāda* because all *citt[ā]* rooted in aversion is accompanied by unpleasant mental feeling.” (2001:49 f & n95).

As such, “covetousness and displeasure” refers to **the observing of dharmas**, which begins with the five hindrances.<sup>321</sup> The monk effects the abandoning of the hindrances by the observing [contemplation] of impermanence, of fading away (of lust), of cessation (of suffering) and of letting go (of defilements), and thus comes to look upon the object with equanimity. On the hindrances, **Analayo** notes:

The Ekōttara Āgama version [of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta] also refers to the need to overcome the five hindrances at this point, without however bringing in the Tathāgatas or the seven factors of awakening. It is noteworthy that both Chinese versions<sup>322</sup> in this way bring up the need to remove the five hindrances at the outset of their exposition, a need also mentioned in the Pāli commentary to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta [MA 1:244].

Judging from the remainder of the exposition found in the Pāli and the Madhyama Āgama versions, this need should not be taken in an absolute sense, since these three versions direct mindfulness to the presence and the arising of these five hindrances as one of their contemplation of dhammas, instructions which would be meaningless if the removal does however constitute a requisite for the higher stages of practice and thereby for gaining the range of benefits described in the Pāli and Chinese versions, which may be why the Chinese versions mention the need to remove the five hindrances after having highlighted the range of benefit of *sati-paṭṭhāna* practices. (Analayo, 2005:2)

Occasionally, the phrase, “concentrated with one-pointed mind” (*samāhitā ek’agga, cittā*)—for example, **the (Satipaṭṭhāna) Salla Sutta**<sup>323</sup>—shows the presence of concentration. Thus, altogether four of **the five spiritual faculties** (*pañc’indriya*)<sup>324</sup> are indicated here, while faith (*saddhā*), though not mentioned, is clearly the motivation behind the practice in the first place. This shows that mindfulness does not work alone, but in harmony with all the spiritual faculties.

As a meditation, *satipaṭṭhāna* encompasses the last three factors of the noble eightfold path (right

<sup>318</sup> My thanks to Robert Eddison (through email communication) for this information.

<sup>319</sup> Personal meeting, 30 March 2003.

<sup>320</sup> *Yasmā pan’ettha abhijjhā-h, gahaṇena kāma-c, chando domanassa-g, gahaṇena vyāpādo saṅgaham gacchati tasmā nīvaraṇa, pariyāpanna, balava, dhamma, dvaya, dassanena nīvaraṇa-p, pahānam vuttam hoti ti vedītabbam.* “The taking of *domanassa* includes *vyāpāda* because all *citta* rooted in aversion is accompanied by unpleasant mental feeling.” (Gethin’s n, 2003:50)

<sup>321</sup> Cf M 1:274/39.13; see also **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.13) and **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.36) on how to deal with the hindrances in one’s meditation.

<sup>322</sup> MĀ 98 = T1.582b-584b; EĀ 12.1 = T 2.568a-569b.

<sup>323</sup> S 47.4/5:145.

<sup>324</sup> **The five faculties** (*pañc’indriya*)—faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, wisdom—are traditionally said to be “the qualities of a leader” (from *inda*, Skt *indra*, meaning “leader”). However, as spiritual faculties, they are the tools for personal development. When these spiritual faculties become “unshakable” by their opposites, they are then known as “spiritual powers” (*bala*). See **Sārakaṇī S** (S 55.24) = SD 3.6.

effort, right mindfulness, right concentration), but its prerequisites are said—for example, in **the (Satipaṭṭhāna) Bhikkhu Sutta** (S 47.3/5:142-144) and **the Bāhiya Sutta** (S 47.15/5:165 f)—to be moral virtue (*sīla*) and straightened view (*diṭṭhi ujukā*). Moral virtue comprises the first three factors of right speech, right action, right livelihood, and straightened view consists of right view. As such, *satipaṭṭhāna* encompasses the whole of the noble eight path, which is understandably called “the way leading to the development of the focusses of mindfulness” (**Mānadinna Sutta**, S 47.30/5:178).

**4.2f Overcoming covetousness and discontent.** The predominant mental hindrances are the first two—sense-desire (*kāma-c, chanda*) and ill will (*vyāpāda*)—mentioned in the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas as “covetousness and discontent” (*abhijjhā, domanassa*). In overcoming them, even temporarily, one easily overcomes the other three: sloth and torpor (*thīna, middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca, -kukkucca*), and persistent doubt (*vicikicchā*).<sup>325</sup> These hindrances have two general negative effects on the meditator: the mind drifts “downwards” (that is, one keeps losing one’s energy) or it floats “upwards” (one becomes agitated). Either way, the mind is out of focus with its meditation object.

In this connection, the Tiantai master, **Zhiyi** (538-597), in his *Tongmen Zhiguan* (*Śamatha and Vipāśyanā for Beginners*), gives the following tips for dealing with two kinds of distractions:

What is a **sinking mind**? If during the meditation the mind is dull, confused or unrecordable, while the head drops, this shows a sinking mind. In such a case, it should be fixed on the tip of the nose to nail it there and to prevent it from wandering elsewhere. This is the way to regulate a sinking mind.

What is a **floating mind**? If during the meditation, it drifts about and is uneasy, while thoughts follow externals, this shows a floating mind. In such a case, it should be pushed down and fixed on the navel to prevent thoughts from rising; thus the mind will be stabilized and will be easily quieted.

Therefore, the absence of the sinking or floating state shows a regulated mind.

(Zhiyi, *Tongmen Zhiguan*, in Lu K’uan Yü, 1964:126; emphases added)

**4.3 DHYANA BEFORE SATIPATTHANA?** One of issues regarding *satipaṭṭhāna* (the practice of focussing the mind on the body, feelings, the mind, and dharmas) is whether this is properly done *after* one has overcome the mental hindrances [4.2c] and attains full focus, that is, dhyana, or *before* one has overcome the hindrances and attained dhyana [7].

**4.3a Dhyana before satipatthana.** Indeed, according to some teachers, such as **Brahmavamso**, *vineyya* here means that the five hindrances [5D.2] have to be abandoned *before* practising *satipaṭṭhāna* [4.2c]. This is because the mental hindrances, in the form of mental impurities (*cetaso upakkilesa*), weaken wisdom (*paññāya dubbhā, karaṇe*),<sup>326</sup> preventing one from attaining dhyana and from realizing the truth. **Gethin** holds a similar view:

the *satipaṭṭhānas* are only properly practised when the mind is at least temporarily free from the five hindrances; that is to say, it is only when the mind has been made still, calm, happy and lucid that the body, feelings, the mind itself and *dhamma(s)* can be truly “watched.” It seems to me that as much is already quite explicit in a number of Nikāya treatments of the basic *satipaṭṭhāna* formula; at the very least these treatments make it clear why the commentaries give the explanations they do. (Gethin 2001:50)

For example, in **the Naḷakapāna Sutta** (M 68), the Buddha tells Anuruddha, “While [a son of family] still does not attain to zest and joy that are secluded from sensual pleasures and secluded from unwholesome states, or to something more peaceful than that, covetousness [and the other four hindrances] will invade his mind and remain” (M 68.6/1:463).<sup>327</sup>

In an important passage, **the Danta, bhūmi Sutta** (M 125), which Gethin quotes (id), clearly shows the abandoning of the five hindrances as the prelude to the practice of the four satipatthanas,

<sup>325</sup> On the hindrances, see (**Nīvaraṇā**) **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55) = SD 3.12.

<sup>326</sup> D 2:83, 3:49, 101, A 2:211, 3:93, 100, 386 f, Vbh 245, 256.

<sup>327</sup> This para: personal communication from Brahmavamso. On an important complementary opinion, see §4.3 below.

and how satipatthana progresses into dhyana.<sup>328</sup>

**21** He resorts to a secluded dwelling: a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle grove, the open air, a heap of straw. On returning from his almsround, after his meal, he sits down, and having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright, establishes mindfulness before him.

Abandoning covetousness for the world, he dwells with a mind free from covetousness. He purifies his mind from covetousness.

Abandoning the defect of ill will, he dwells with a mind free from ill will, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings. He purifies his mind from the defect of ill will.

Abandoning sloth and torpor, he dwells free from sloth and torpor, perceiving light, mindful and clearly aware. He purifies his mind from sloth and torpor.

Abandoning restlessness and worry, he dwells unagitated, with his mind stilled internally. He purifies his mind from restlessness and worry.

Abandoning doubt, he dwells, having crossed over doubt, not confused over wholesome states. He purifies his mind from doubt.<sup>329</sup>

**22 Having thus abandoned these five hindrances**, imperfections of the mind that weaken wisdom, he dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing the body in the body, putting away covetousness and displeasure in the world.

...he dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing feelings in the feelings, putting away covetousness and displeasure in the world.

...he dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing the mind in the mind, putting away covetousness and displeasure in the world.

...he dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing dharmas in the dharmas, putting away covetousness and displeasure in the world.

**23** Aggivessana, just as an elephant tamer sinks a large post into the earth and binds the forest elephant to it by the neck in order to subdue his habits and thoughts of the forest, for abandoning the trouble, torture and fever of the forest, and to instill in him ways pleasing to humans.

Even so, these four focusses of mindfulness are the tethers for the mind of the noble disciple so as to subdue his habits of the household life, to subdue his ways and thoughts of the household life, for abandoning the trouble, torture and fever of the world, in order to attain to the true way and realize nirvana. (M 125.21-23/3:135 f)

The passage then goes on to instruct the practitioner to avoid all thinking, that is, not to think thoughts that are connected with the body, with feelings, with the mind and with dharmas (*mā ca kāyūpasamhitam...vedanūpasamhitam...cittūpasamhitam...dhammūpasamhitam vitakkaṃ vitakkesi*).<sup>330</sup>

...and with the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, he reaches and dwells in **the second dhyana**, free from initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness born of concentration.<sup>331</sup> (M 125.25/3:136)

<sup>328</sup> See Analayo 2003:62.

<sup>329</sup> This passage (21) is usually given as a prelude to the 4 dhyanas (eg **Mahā Assa.pura S**, M 39.13-15/1:274-276), but here what follows is a description of the 4 satipatthanas. This passage shows that the hindrances are overcome before going into satipatthana; but cf §4.4(B) below.

<sup>330</sup> The Pali here is problematic. Here I follow the PTS ed which speaks of thoughts in relation to the objects of satipatthana (**kāyūpasamhitam vitakkaṃ** etc). Be & Se however speaks instead of sensual thoughts (**kāmūpasamhitam vitakkaṃ**). “Judging from the dynamics of the discourse, this seems to be the less probable reading, since this passage follows on the removal of the five hindrances and leads on to absorption, and that straightaway into the second jhāna.” (Analayo 2003:62 n81). The corresponding Chinese version (T’iao Yü Ti Ching, MĀ 198), however, supports the Be & Se readings, and also mentions the attainment of the 1st dhyana, which is missing from all Pali eds.

<sup>331</sup> *So vitakka,vicārānaṃ vūpasamā ajjhataṃ sampasādanam cetaso ekodi,bhāvaṃ avitakkaṃ avicārānaṃ samādhijaṃ pīti,sukhaṃ dutiya-j,jhānaṃ...upasampajja viharati.*

Then he goes on to attain the third, and the fourth dhyanas, and finally he realizes, according to reality, the four noble truths: suffering, the arising of suffering, the ending of suffering and the way to the ending of suffering. He then knows that his mind is finally free of the cankers.<sup>332</sup>

**4.3b Satipaṭṭhana with dhyana.** While what has been discussed here so far—that the hindrances should be overcome *before* practising the satipaṭṭhanas—it should be noted, refers to working towards the ultimate goal of spiritual liberation. On a simpler level of daily practice, say by the lay practitioner, it is possible to deal with the hindrance *while* one is practising the satipaṭṭhanas [4.2c]. **Sujato**, in explaining the terms *abhijjhā* and *domanassa*, gives very helpful and inspiring directions here:

A better way of seeing these terms [paññā, *sampajañña*] is suggested by the Sanskrit Mahāparinibbāna Sutta. There is a well-known episode when a gorgeous courtesan [Amra, -pālī, P Ambapālī] comes to visit. In the Pali, the Buddha urges the monks to be “mindful and clearly knowing.” The Sanskrit expands this a little: “Bhikshus, dwell ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful. Ambapālī the courtesan comes here!”<sup>333</sup> The text goes on to define “ardent” as the four right efforts, “clearly comprehending” as awareness in daily activities, and “mindful” as the four satipaṭṭhanas. This would seem to correspond exactly to the usage in the satipaṭṭhana formula itself. Now, these practices are all a standard part of the spiritual path, and are included in or corresponding to elements of the gradual training.

This suggests a connection between the final phrase, “having removed covetousness and aversion for the world” with the preparatory phase of the gradual training, especially **sense restraint**. The standard passage on sense restraint, which in the Theravāda account of the gradual training usually occurs just before “clear comprehension,” includes the same words “covetousness & aversion” (*abhijjhā, domanassa*) that occur in the satipaṭṭhana formula.<sup>334</sup>

In the Sanskrit the parallel with satipaṭṭhana is even clearer, for there the phrase is “covetousness & aversion for the world” (*abhidhyā, daurmanasye loke*).<sup>335</sup> Also, the Sanskrit tends to use the word “mindfulness” more frequently here; this may be seen in both the Sanskrit **Śrāmaṇya,phala Sūtra**, and also **the Śrāvaka, bhūmi**.

We should examine a little more closely how the key words *abhijjhā* and *domanassa* are used. *Abhijjhā* is used in two clearly defined senses. As one of the ten “pathways of unskillful actions”<sup>336</sup> it means straightforwardly covetousness: “Oh! That what belongs to him should be mine!”<sup>337</sup> As an alternative to *kama-c, chanda* (“sensual desire”) as the first of the five hindrances, it is much more subtle, encompassing any desire or interest in sensual experience. In the gradual training, both the Pali and the Sanskrit describe the overcoming of this hindrance as “abandoning covetousness for the world,” which again is very similar to the satipaṭṭhana formula.

The term *domanassa*, which I render here as “aversion,” usually means “mental suffering,” but in at least one context it clearly stands for the hindrance of ill-will,<sup>338</sup> and this surely must be the meaning in satipaṭṭhana, too. While the use of exactly the same phrase *abhijjhā, domanassa* tends to underscore the closeness of the phrase in satipaṭṭhana with sense restraint, I do not see any major significance in the exact choice of terms for “ill-will”; the Pali tends to use a number of terms more-or-less synonymously.

While as a hindrance ill-will can be very subtle, in the ten pathways of unskillful actions, it is defined in very strong terms: “May these beings be destroyed, killed, and wiped out!” So it

<sup>332</sup> See Gethin 2003:50 f.

<sup>333</sup> Waldschmidt 1950-51:10.8.

<sup>334</sup> D 2.64/DĀ 27/T22/EĀ 42.7/SĀ 154-163\*, etc.

<sup>335</sup> Konrad Meisig, *Das Śrāmaṇyaphala-sūtra*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987:268.

<sup>336</sup> “**The ten pathways of unskillful actions**” (*dasa akusala kamma, patha*): 3 bodily deeds (*kāya, kamma*): (1) destroying life (*pāṇātipāta*), (2) taking the not-given (*adinn’ādāna*), (3) sexual misconduct (*kāmesu micchā-cārā*); 4 verbal deeds: (4) false speech (*musā, vāda*), (5) tale-bearing (*pisunā, vācā*), (6) harsh speech (*pharusa, vācā*), (7) frivolous talk (*samphapphalāpa*); 3 mental deeds: (8) covetousness (*abhijjhā*), (9) ill will (*vyāpāda*), (10) false view (*micchā, diṭṭhi*) (D 3:269, 290; A 5:264). See **Jāṇussoṇi S** (A 10.177) = SD 2.6; (**Kusalākusala Sañcetanika S** (A 10.206) = SD 3.9; **Sāleyyaka S** (S 36.22) = SD 5.7; **Titth’āyatana S** (A 3.61.2) = SD 6.8.

<sup>337</sup> A 10.176.

<sup>338</sup> Sn 1112

seems that we can consider these two terms, covetousness and aversion, as encompassing a variety of levels of intensity.

The coarse levels are abandoned through the preliminary practices, especially sense restraint, while the full overcoming occurs with the abandoning of hindrances on entering jhana. **It would, therefore, be a little over-strong to insist, as some do, that the phrase “having removed desire and aversion for the world” implies that one must attain jhana before doing satipatthana;** the phrase is simply too vague to bear such a definitive interpretation. (A History of Mindfulness, 2004b:114) [5B]

On a practical level (especially for the lay practitioner), the mental hindrances may be at least temporarily suspended by simple spiritual preparations, such as keeping the precepts, listening to an inspiring Dharma talk, receiving instructions from a meditation teacher or spiritual friend, or attending a meditation retreat. An interesting passage from **the Bhikkhuṇī Vāsaka Sutta** (S 47.10),<sup>339</sup> for example, shows the Buddha instructing Ānanda on how to deal with the mind during satipatthana practice. Having overcome the hindrances, the practitioner goes on to deal with his thoughts, so that he gains concentration:

Here, Ānanda, a monk dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing...*the four satipatthanas*,...putting away covetousness and displeasure in the world.

While he is observing the body in the body,...

...observing feelings in the feelings,...

...observing the mind in the mind,...

...observing dharmas in the dharmas, there arises in him, based on the body, either a fever in the body or sluggishness in the mind, or the mind is distracted outwardly.<sup>340</sup>

That monk, Ānanda, should then direct his mind towards some inspiring sign.<sup>341</sup> When he directs his mind towards an inspiring sign, gladness arises.

When he is gladdened, zest arises.

When the mind is uplifted by zest, the body becomes tranquil.

When the body is tranquil, he feels joy [happiness].

The mind of the joyful [happy] becomes concentrated.

He reflects thus: “The purpose for the sake of which I have directed my mind has been achieved. Let me now withdraw it.”<sup>342</sup>

So he withdraws the mind and he neither applies nor sustains thought.<sup>343</sup>

He understands: “Without applied thought and sustained thought, internally mindful, I am joyful [happy].”<sup>344</sup>

In this way, Ānanda, there is **directed cultivation** (*pañidhāya bhāvanā*).

(S 47.10/5:154-156)

<sup>339</sup> Called **Bhikkhun’upassaya S** in the Be:CSCD. See SD 24.2.

<sup>340</sup> “There arises in him...distracted outwardly,” *tassa kāye kāyānupassino viharato kay’ārammaṇo vā uppajjati kāyasmiṃ pariḷāho cetaso vā līnattaṃ bahiddhā vā cittaṃ vikkhipati*.

<sup>341</sup> *Ten’Ānanda bhikkhunā kismiṃ cid eva pasādanīye nimitte cittaṃ pañidahitabbaṃ*. Comy: A fever of defilement (*kilesa, pariḷāha*) arises, having made the body its basis (*ārammaṇa*). When this happens, one should not allow oneself to be excited by it but should then direct the mind to some inspiring sign, that is, one should direct the meditating mind (*kammaṭṭhāna, citta*) to some object that inspires faith, such as the Buddha, etc (SA 3:205).

<sup>342</sup> That is, redirect it to the original meditation object. (SA 3:206)

<sup>343</sup> Comy explains that ‘without thinking and pondering’ (*na ca vitakketi na ca vicāreti*) means that he is ‘without defiled thinking, without defiled pondering’ (*kilesa, vitakkaṃ na vitakketi kilesa, vicāraṃ na vicāreti*) (SA 3:206). However, as Bodhi has noted, the absence of thinking (*vitakka*) and pondering (*vicāra*) seems to indicate that he has reached the second dhyana (S:B 1922 n147).

<sup>344</sup> Comy explains this to mean that he is “without defiled applied thought, without defiled sustained thought” (SA 3:206). However, the forsaking of applied thought and sustained thought here implies that one has reached the 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyanas: see **Danta, bhūmi S** (M 126), where the 4 satipatthanas lead to the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyanas, and the satipatthana is to be practised without applied thought or sustained thought, leading as such to the 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyanas (M 126.25/3:136).

Here again we see the language of dhyana being used in the satipatthana context. In fact, the passage, “gladness arises, . . . the mind of one who is joyful becomes concentrated,” is a stock used in the Sīla-k,khandha Vagga (Chapter on the Moralities) of the Dīgha Nikāya to introduce the arising of the first dhyana.<sup>345</sup>

The Saṃyutta Commentary explains “cultivation by direction” (*paṇidhāya bhāvanā*) as meaning “cultivation by having put aside” (*thapetvā bhāvanā*). This is cultivated by directing the mind away from its main object toward some other meditation object, and when the mind is focussed again, one redirects one’s mind to the original meditation object. The Commentary compares this cultivation to a man carrying a load of sugar to his village, who rests midway, puts down his load, chews a sugar cane, and the continues his way (SA 3:207). **Analayo** add this important note:

At the beginning of this passage the Buddha spoke in praise of being well established in the four *satipaṭṭhānas*. Thus the reason for his exposition about “directed” and “undirected” modes of meditation appears to be that he wanted to show how *samatha* can act as a support for the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*. (2003:64)

The difference between “concentration” (*samādhi*) here<sup>346</sup> and “mindfulness” (*sati*) is clearly seen in the dynamics of Buddhist meditation. In the meditation method as taught by Ajahn Chah’s lineage, for example, a beginner starts off by directing the mind, “I will watch the present moment and let go of the past and the future,” and so on. Then the meditator gives his full attention to the meditation object (for example, the breath, lovingkindness, or walking).

The roots of such a meditation practice, as we have seen above, is found in the Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta, especially **the Bhikkhuṇī Vāsaka Sutta** (S 47.10), where the Buddha recommends that, if one faces difficulties in satipatthana practice, one should temporarily meditate on a calm (*samatha*) object of meditation to cultivate mindfulness and joy. Hence, I have rendered *vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassam*, as “removing covetousness and displeasure in the world” and putting this at the end of the sentence, thus:

a monk dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, observing the body in the body, . . . observing feelings in the feelings, . . . observing mind in the mind, . . . observing dharmas in the dharmas, removing covetousness and displeasure in the world.<sup>347</sup>

**4.3c Satipatthana is the middle way.** From these references it is clear that satipatthana is not a (or the) “vipassana” meditation, although it may be cultivated to lead to the arising of insight (*vipassanā*). To say satipatthana is vipassana “meditation” is one extreme; the other extreme is to regard it as purely a samatha method. **Analayo** clearly points this out:

On the other hand, however, to consider *satipaṭṭhāna* purely as a concentration exercise goes too far and misses the important difference between what can become a basis for the development of concentration and what belongs to the realm of calmness meditation proper.<sup>348</sup> In fact, the characteristic functions of *sati* and concentration (*samādhi*) are quite distinct. While concentration corresponds to an enhancement of the selective function of the mind, by way of restricting the breadth of attention, *sati* on its own represents an enhancement of the recollective function, by way of expanding the breadth of attention.<sup>349</sup> The two modes of mental func-

<sup>345</sup> See eg **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2) = SD 8.10 (2) & also Gethin 2003:51.

<sup>346</sup> “Here” concentration (*samādhi*) refers to the meditation practice proper, while the “samadhi” of the noble eightfold path refers to the effects and benefits of mental development as a whole serving, together with moral virtue, as a support for liberating wisdom.

<sup>347</sup> U Silananda similarly ends the sentence with “removing covetousness and grief in the world” (1990:177); also 1990:22-25.

<sup>348</sup> Cf eg Schmithausen 1973:179, who suggests that satipatthana was originally purely a concentration exercise. (Analayo’s fn)

<sup>349</sup> Cf also Bullen 1969:44; Delmonte 1991:48-50; Goleman 1977a:298; Shapiro 1980:15-19; and Speeth 1982:146, 151. Gunaratana 1990:159 = 1992:165 aptly sums up: “Concentration is exclusive. It settles down on one item and ignores everything else. Mindfulness is inclusive. It stands back from the focus of attention and watches with a broad focus.” (Analayo’s fn; refs normalized)

tioning correspond to two different cortical control mechanisms in the brain.<sup>350</sup> This difference, however, does not imply that the two are incompatible, since during absorption attainment both are present. But during absorption attainment *sati* becomes mainly presence of mind, when it to some extent loses its natural breadth owing to strong focusing power of concentration. (Analayo 2003:63)

Thus although it plays an important part in the development of absorption, considered on its own *sati* is a mental quality distinct from concentration. Indeed, the reason even the attainment of high levels of absorption by itself is insufficient for liberating insight is quite probably related to the inhibition of the passive observational qualities of awareness by the strong focussing power of absorption concentration. This, however, does not detract from the fact that the development of concentration fulfils an important role in the context of higher meditation... (Analayo 2003:65 f; see also ch IV)

Let me comment on one last point—on a apparent discrepancy—before we go on to the next section. At first blush, Brahmavamso [4.2c] and Sujato here appear to have differing opinions, but in the final analysis (based on what is unsaid), their views are complementary. While Brahmavamso is referring to the *ultimate result* of meditation (ie the permanent uprooting of mental hindrances), Sujato is referring to the early phase of foundation practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*. However, as we have seen, both views actually point to the same fact—that the mental hindrances can at least be temporarily suspended (for example, by the proper and fervent observance of the precepts) in preparation for the satipaṭṭhāna practice. Here, Gethin concludes instructively:

The Nikāya and later tradition appear to be agreed, then, that the successful practice of the four establishings of mindfulness is dependent on the stilling of the mind by the abandoning of the five hindrances. Of course, for the commentaries the mind that is without the five hindrances is of two basic types—it is either stilled in “access” concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*) or in full “absorption” (*appanā*) equivalent to full *jhāna*; any such distinction would seem to be lacking in the Nikāyas.<sup>351</sup> With this proviso, it seems to me that the substance of the commentarial understanding of the basic *satipaṭṭhāna* formula is already contained in the above Nikāya passages.

To sum up, the point I wish to make is no doubt simple enough, but it can be overlooked. For the Nikāyas and later tradition the effective practice of the establishings of mindfulness is seen as presupposing a certain degree of concentration (*samādhi*) or calm (*samatha*). Of course, what is clear is that this concentration or calm is itself the outcome of the preparatory practice of the establishings of mindfulness—especially of the various exercises associated with watching the body. It might be said, then, that in order to practice the *satipaṭṭhānas* the *bhikkhu* requires concentration; in order to acquire concentration he practices the *satipaṭṭhānas*. Stated without paradox, this means that the texts distinguish between the initial stages of establishing of mindfulness, which are preparatory in nature, and the establishing of mindfulness proper. (Gethin 2003:53; emphasis added)

## 5 Comparative analysis

**FOCUSSES OF MINDFULNESS.** The teaching in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta starts with the breath meditation [2] which is identical to that of **the Ānāpānasati Sutta** (M 118) and **the Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 62), except for the similes found only in the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas. All three texts give at least the first four of the famous 16-step breath meditation.

The sutta is then divided into four sections based on the focusses of mindfulness:

**(A) Observing the body** (*kāyānupassanā*) [6-31], comprising these five sets of exercises: the

<sup>350</sup> Brown 1977:243: “two major cortical mechanisms...involved in selecting and processing information ...a frontal system associated with restrictive processing and a posterior-temporal system associated with more wide-range processing of information. The brain may be likened to a camera than can use either a wide-angle lens or a zoom lens. Or, in cognitive terms, attention can be directed to the more dominant details in a stimulus field or to the entire field.” (Analayo’s fn)

<sup>351</sup> See LS Cousins, “Buddhist *Jhāna*.” In *Religion* 3 1973:118; Vism 4.32 f. (Gethin fn)

four postures [6-7], clear awareness [8-9], perception of foulness [10-11], the four elements [12-13], and the nine “corpse” meditations (that is, the nine stages of bodily decomposition) [14-31].

**(B) Observing feelings** (*vedanā'nupassanā*) [32-33], one exercise, considering feelings in terms of the affective quality—as either pleasant, painful or neutral—with each being examined again as being either carnal or spiritual.

**(C) Observing the mind (or mind-consciousness)** (*cittānupassanā*) [34-35], one exercise, examining 16 states of mind coloured by their concomitants.<sup>352</sup>

**(D) Observing dharmas** (*dhammānupassanā*)<sup>353</sup> [36-45] is the most diversified exercise involving these five schemes: the five hindrances [36-37], the five aggregates [38-39], the six sense-bases [40-41], the seven factors of awakening [42-43], and the four noble truths [44-45].

The first focus of mindfulness, the observing of the body, deals with the observing of the breath, and of the body postures, parts, and activities, bringing to mind to focus. The second focus, the observing of feeling, deals with the affective tone—pleasant, unpleasant, neutral—that colour every sense-experience, whether a sensation or a mentation. These first two focusses are generally *descriptive*: one merely keeps one's attention to what occurs at the present moment.

The third focus of mindfulness, the observing of the mind, is somewhat *evaluative*. One is to notice when sensual desire is present, or when it is fading away, or when it does not arise any more. This is in fact the first of the five mental hindrances. One similarly observes the other four hindrances—ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt—in the same way. In textual terms, the second and third focusses are of about equal length, and are the shortest of the four focusses of mindfulness.

The fourth focus of mindfulness deals with the observing of dharmas or phenomena. This focus covers the whole gamut of Buddhist psychology: the five hindrances, the five aggregates, the six sense-bases, the seven awakening-factors, and the four noble truths. In statistical terms, this section contains a total of 108 dharmas or phenomena<sup>354</sup> to be observed.

In the case of the hindrances and the aggregates, one observes the presence of each of them and its impermanent nature. For the sense-bases, one watches whatever fetter<sup>355</sup> that arises in connection with each faculty/object and when they are abandoned. As for the awakening-factors, one goes on observing them until they mature fully. The four noble truths are tersely stated in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10.44). They are to be observed “just as they are.” The truths are analysed in detail in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (D 22.17-21), forming about a third of the Sutta's bulk!<sup>356</sup> Interestingly, the whole long treatise has only a single “insight refrain” at its close, just before the Sutta's conclusion.

Altogether the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta teaches 21 main contemplation exercises, each of which has two aspects: the basic exercise followed by a stock passage on “insight” (*vipassanā*), showing how the

<sup>352</sup> As in **Pubba S** (S 51.11/5:263-266).

<sup>353</sup> The exact meaning of *dhamma* in *dhammānupassanā* has been disputed. It is often rendered “mind-objects” or “mental objects”—“as if it denoted the sixth external sense base, but this seems too narrow and specific. More likely *dhammā* here signifies all phenomena, which for purposes of insight are grouped into fixed modes of classification determined by the Dhamma itself—the doctrine or teaching—and culminating in the realization of the ultimate Dhamma comprised within the Four Noble Truths. There are five such schemes [see above].” (Bodhi, S:B 1504 f). A good tr for *dhamma* here would be “phenomena,” “nature of things,” or the anglicized “dharma.”

<sup>354</sup> The 108 dharmas as listed as followed:

5 hindrances × 5 (presence, absence, arising, letting go, further non-arising) = 25,

5 aggregates × 3 (the aggregate, arising, passing away) = 15,

6 sense-bases × 6 (faculty, object, fetter resulting from both, letting go of fetter, its further non-arising) = 36,

7 awakening-factors × 4 (presence, absence, arising, perfecting) = 28,

4 truths = 4. For a full list, see Olendzki 2004:16 f.

<sup>355</sup> The 10 fetters (*saṃyojana*) listed here are not those in connection with sainthood (stream-winning, etc) (qv **Ānāpānasati S**, M 118.10/3:80 n = SD 7.13), but of the Abhidhamma tradition, namely, sensual desire (*kāma-c, chanda*), repulsion (*paṭigha*), conceit (*māna*), views (*ditthi*), doubt (*vicikicchā*), desire for becoming (*bhava, rāga*), attachment to rules and rituals (*śīla-b, bata parāmasa*), envy (*issā*), avarice (*macchariya*) and ignorance (*avijjā*) (Vbh 17).

<sup>356</sup> See 1(10) “Historical developments,” for problems concerning this.



calmness (*samatha*) is upgraded to insight practice [4.3]. The sutta closes with the Buddha declaring that by applying the four focusses of mindfulness, a practitioner would be able to see the fruits of liberation in as short a time as just a week [46-47].

### **(5A) *Kāyānupassanā***

**5A.1 The 1<sup>st</sup> satipatthana and the *Kāya,gatā,sati* Sutta.** The whole of the first focus of mindfulness—the contemplation on the body (*kāyānupassanā*), but without the insight refrain<sup>357</sup>—is found in the *Kāya,gatā,sati* Sutta (M 119), which then follows up with the dhyana passages, the progress through the mindfulness of the body, and closes the benefits of the practice.<sup>358</sup> In fact, speaking of the basic importance of the mindfulness of the body, Gethin explains:

Thus the *Kāya,gatā,sati* Sutta consists basically of an alternative treatment of precisely the same set of fourteen activities<sup>359</sup> that are given in the (*Mahā*) *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* under the heading *kāyānupassanā*. The reason why *kāya-gatā sati* is singled out for extra treatment would seem to be that it is considered the common basis for subsequent development of all mindfulness. (Gethin 2001:47, cf 52 f)

As such, it is clear why the observing of the body heads the satipatthana practice: it forms the vital foundation for the progression from watching body to watching dharmas, beginning with the clear awareness (*sampajāna*) of the more immediately accessible fields of experience to an awareness of as subtler and deeper ones. [4.2c]

The **Vibhaṅga Commentary** gives a detailed explanation of the observing of the body (VbhA 222-263), especially on the 32 parts of the body. In fact, this is the only teaching found in the *Kāyānupassanā* section in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Vibhaṅga*. This evidently shows that this is a very old part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* Sutta, or possibly that the other sections were added later (after the Buddha). The **Visuddhi,magga**, too, in its section of meditation, gives a similar explanation but in slightly greater detail.<sup>360</sup>

**5A.2 Sutta comparison.** The two Pāli *Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas*<sup>361</sup> describe the first focus of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)—the observing of the body (*kāyānupassanā*)—as comprising the mindfulness of breathing, of the four postures, of bodily activities, of the 31 parts of the body, of the four elements and of the 9 stages of decaying corpses in the charnel-ground. The two Chinese versions<sup>362</sup> differ considerably from the Pāli versions and from each other. The **Madhyama Āgama** version has several additional exercises, while the **Ekōttara Āgama** version has a comparatively short account of body contemplation, giving only four exercises.<sup>363</sup> Both the Pāli and Chinese versions share in common the mindfulness of the 31 parts of the body, of the elements, and of the decaying corpses.

<sup>357</sup> The absence of the insight refrain from *Kāya,gatā,sati S* can also be interpreted as the lateness of the refrains, which were added to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Ss* at a later date. In place of the insight refrain, *Kāya,gatā,sati S* has the following refrain throughout: “As he dwells thus diligent, exertive, resolute, his memories and thoughts of the household life are abandoned. With their abandoning, his mind steadies itself, settles, becomes one, attains samadhi [becomes concentrated]. In this way, monks, a monk cultivates mindfulness of the body” (*tassa evaṃ appamattassa ātāpino pahitattassa viharato ye te gehasitā sara,saṅkappā te pahiyanti, tesam pahānā ajjhataṃ eva cittaṃ santiṭṭhati sannisīdati ekodī,hoti samādhiyati. Evaṃ pi bhikkhave bhikkhu kāya,gatā satim bhāveti*). On the “insight refrain” (also called “satipatthana refrain”), see Analayo 2003:92-116 (ch 5).

<sup>358</sup> M 119/3:88-99. The *Kāya,gatā,sati S* also shows that the mindfulness of the body is the basis for dhyana.

<sup>359</sup> That is, 6 sets of exercises of *kāyānupassanā* common to both *Kāya,gatā,sati S* and *Satipaṭṭhāna Ss*: (1) the breath meditation, (2) the 4 postures, (3) clear awareness, (4) perception of foulness (31 parts of the body), (5) the 4 elements, (6-14) the 9 charnel-ground observings.

<sup>360</sup> Vism 8.42-144/239-266. See *Kāya,gatā,sati S* (M 116) = SD 12.21Introd (5).

<sup>361</sup> D 22; M 10.

<sup>362</sup> MĀ 98/T1.582b-584b and EĀ 12.1/T2.568a-569b. See (1B) n above for details.

<sup>363</sup> Based on a comparative study of different versions of this *satipaṭṭhāna*, **Schmithausen** 1976:250 suggests that awareness of the body’s postures may have been the most original version of mindfulness of the body, since unlike some of the other exercises listed, its nature corresponds best to the nature of mindful observation as found in the other *satipaṭṭhānas*. **Bronkhorst** 1985:311, however, disagrees and, based on examining the Pāli *Vibhaṅga*’s presentation, concludes that observing of the anatomical parts may have been the most ancient version of this *satipaṭṭhāna*. (Analayo’s fn)

Other works of the southern tradition present mindfulness of the body in an even more succinct fashion, since the *Vibhaṅga* mentions only contemplation of the body's anatomy in its exposition of this *satipaṭṭhāna*, while the *Paṭisambhidhāmagga* has the same exercise and mindfulness of the four elements.<sup>364</sup> The exposition found in the *Paṭisambhidhāmagga* is thereby similar to the presentation given in the *Dharmaskandha*, an *Abhidharma* work of the *Sarvāstivāda* tradition, which also lists only the anatomical parts and the elements for mindfulness of the body.<sup>365</sup> (Anālayo 2005:5)

**5A.3 Sequence of exercises.** In the observing of the body, the Pāli sequence is “the breath meditation” [4], “the four postures” [6], and “clear awareness” [8]. **The Madhyama Āgama** sequence, however, especially in the Sarvāsti,vāda Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra,<sup>366</sup> is just the reverse: clear awareness, the four postures, and breath meditation. On this issue of practice sequence of the breath meditation, Anālayo notes:

A point in favour of the Madhyama Āgama presentation is that **mindfulness of the four postures and clear comprehension of the activities of the body** are relatively rudimentary forms of contemplation. Due to their more elementary character, it seems reasonable to place them at the beginning of an exposition of satipaṭṭhāna practice. From a practical perspective, these two types of mindfulness practices would constitute convenient ways for building up a foundation in mindfulness, thereby enabling the meditator to better undertake the more sophisticated exercises listed later on.

Another point in favour of the Madhyama Āgama sequence is that mindfulness of postures and of activities is predominantly concerned with the body in action. In contrast, the Pāli instructions for mindfulness of breathing describe the practitioner sitting down cross-legged in order to carry out this exercise.

The same requirement may well apply to the remaining exercises for mindfulness of breathing to the third position, after mindfulness of postures and activities, the description of the sitting postures would also move to the most convenient position within the Pāli list of exercises for mindfulness of the body. Such a shift of position can moreover claim for support the Pañca,vimśati,sāhasrikā Prajñā.pāramitā and the Śāriputrābhidharma, both of which similarly have mindfulness of postures and activities precede mindfulness of breathing.<sup>367</sup> (Anālayo, 2005:6 f)

A further note from Sujato says:

In the *Vibhaṅga* the body is treated just as **the 31 parts**. This is clearly a much more primitive conception than the Theravāda Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The elements and corpse meditations, which are found in all three Sutta versions, are also found in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, so it is not clear why they are not brought in here, unless the \**Vibhaṅga Mūla* [the urtext] was older than these texts. The enumeration of the parts of the body as 31 is also early, being shared in common with the four Nikāyas; but by the time the *Khuddakapāṭha* of the *Khuddakanikāya* was compiled (in Sri Lanka?), the brain had been added to complete the now-classic 32.<sup>368</sup> (Sujato 2004b:149)

On the three modes of watching the body—internally, externally, and both—see sections 37bcd above.

<sup>364</sup> Vbh 193 & Pm 2:232. It is noteworthy that this presentation forms part of the Vbh's Suttanta,bhājanīya, its “exposition according to the method of the discourses” (Anālayo's fn). On the 4 elements, see **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 62) = SD 3.11.

<sup>365</sup> T1537/26.476a8+29, a difference being that the *Dharmaskandha* speaks of six elements (as MĀ 98), instead of the four elements found in the *Paisambhidhāmagga* and the two *Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas*.

<sup>366</sup> MĀ 98 = T1.582b21. See Sujato 2005:229 (rev).

<sup>367</sup> **Pañca,vimśati,sāhasrikā**, Dutt 1934:204, tr Conze 1990:153; **Śāriputrābhidharma**, T1548 = T28.613-b3.

<sup>368</sup> Sujato further discusses the observing of the body parts in the context of the Śāriputrābhidharma (2004b:156-161).

**(5B) *Vedanā'nupassanā***

**5B.1 Three kinds of feeling.** The second focus of mindfulness, **the observing of feelings** — like that of the observing of dharmas—is worded in the plural: *vedanāsu vedanā'nupassī*, “one observes feelings in the feelings.” The observing of feelings is treated in the same way in both the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and **the Vibhaṅga**, the second and oldest book of the Abhidhamma.<sup>369</sup> However, there are some new considerations to be made, as **Sujato** notes:

In addition to the usual threefold analysis of feelings, the satipaṭṭhāna material introduces the distinction between “carnal” and “spiritual” feelings. This distinction is not explained in the context of satipaṭṭhāna as such; the detailed discussion is in **the Vedanā-saṃyutta**.<sup>370</sup> Since “carnal” and “spiritual” are unusual terms in this context, it seems likely that the Vedanā-saṃyutta passage was specifically intended to explain the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta material.

This impression is reinforced by another unusual feature, the inclusion of “rapture” [*pīṭi*, “zest”] as a kind of feeling. Rapture is not mentioned in the feeling section of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, but it does fall under feelings in ānāpānasati. Again, this is an unusual if not unique usage, and suggests that the Vedanā-saṃyutta passage was intended to synthesize and explain the feelings sections in both satipaṭṭhāna and ānāpānasati.

The explanations that concern us here are as follows. Carnal feelings are those connected with the senses. Spiritual rapture is in the first two jhanas, spiritual pleasant feeling is in the first three jhanas, while spiritual neutral feeling is in the fourth jhana. Spiritual painful feeling is described as depression arising as one longs for the peaceful liberations one has not yet realized – a feeling I’m sure many are familiar with!

Since the spiritual feelings are primarily defined in terms of jhana there seems little doubt that this non-standard classification was introduced in satipaṭṭhāna specifically to emphasize the importance of the experiences of refined bliss associated with samadhi. Just as we cannot know darkness until we have seen the light, we cannot comprehend the nature of everyday sensual feelings until we have the perspective of contrast.

Since this perspective is a special and universal feature of the satipaṭṭhāna material, it is unreasonable to insist that experience of the subtle feelings of jhana are a dispensable part of the full spectrum of mindfulness meditation. (Sujato 2004b:149; emphases added) [4.3]

In the second focus of mindfulness, **the observing of feelings** (*vedanā,nupassanā*) [B], both the Pāli and Chinese versions direct the mindfulness towards pleasant, painful and neutral feelings, and further distinguish these three into worldly and non-worldly levels.<sup>371</sup> The Madhyama Āgama version, however, further distinguishes these three into physical and mental types, and into those related to sensuality and those not related to sensuality.

The Ekōttara Āgama version goes on to direct the mindfulness to the mutually exclusive nature of pleasant and the painful. Anālayo shows that “a similar proposition, though not as an instruction for actual contemplation, occurs also in other Pāli discourses” (2005), that is, **the Mahā,nidāna Sutta** (D 15.28/2:66,18) and **the Dīgha,nakha Sutta** (M 74.10/1:500,10).

**5B.2 Three ways of watching feelings.** The insight refrain that follows the exercise of contemplation of feeling in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta [§32], as that following the five exercises for the observing of mind, says

So he dwells observing feeling in the feelings internally,  
or, observing feeling in the feelings externally,  
or, observing feeling in the feelings both internally and externally.

<sup>369</sup> See Hinüber 1996:69 (§138).

<sup>370</sup> S 36.31/SĀ 483

<sup>371</sup> Anālayo: The distinction between worldly and unworldly in the Pali versions is literally between “with flesh” and “without flesh” (*sāmisā* and *nirāmisā* in D 22/2:298,15 and M 10/1:59,16), a distinction which the Chinese versions render as “with food” and “without food” (MĀ 98 at T I 583c28 and EĀ 12.1/T2.568c1: 食 and 無食 or 不食, cf also Pasadika 1998:499 n27). (2005:9 n64)

The Vibhaṅga, in commenting on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, helpfully explains these three modes of attention to feelings thus:

**363.** [Contemplation of feelings.] **Internally:** Here a monk, feeling a pleasant feeling, knows, “I feel a pleasant feeling”... (*idha bhikkhu sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamāno: sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyāmi ti...*).

**Externally:** Here, when a pleasant feeling is being felt in another, a monk knows that he (the other person) feels a pleasant feeling... (*idha bhikkhu sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamānaṃ: sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyāmi ti pajānāti...*).<sup>372</sup>

**Internally and externally:** Here, when a pleasant feeling is being felt, a monk knows, “Pleasant feeling”... (*idha bhikkhu sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamānaṃ: sukhaṃ vedanā ti pajānāti...*). (Vbh 195 f)

In other words, one observes one’s own feelings (internally). At other times, as the occasion arises, one observes another’s feeling. And in the third method, one observes, at one time, one’s own feeling and, at another time, another’s feeling. One who is familiar with the meditation object goes back and forth from one object to the other. But there is no combined internal-external object. This similarly applies for the body (Vbh 355/193 f) [3.7d], for the mind (Vbh 365/197 f) [5C.3] and for dharmas (Vbh 367/199-201) [5D.4].

### **(5C) Cittānupassanā**

**5C.1 States of mind.** In the suttas, the Pali term *citta* usually refers to “mind” in the conative and emotional sense, that is, one’s mood or state of mind.<sup>373</sup> Sometimes the suttas use the terms *citta*, *mano* and *viññāṇa* interchangeably—as in **the Brahma, jāla Sutta** (D 1.2.13/1:21,21) and **the Assutavā Sutta** (S 12.61/ 2:94)—where all three terms refer to “mind.”<sup>374</sup> In his translation of the Assutavā Sutta, **Bodhi** makes these helpful comments on the three terms:

Normally I render both *citta* and *mano* as “mind,” but since English has only two words of common usage to denote the faculty of cognition—“mind” and “consciousness”—here [S 12.61] I am compelled to use “mentality” as a makeshift for *mano*. While technically the three terms have the same denotation, in the Nikāyas they are generally used in distinct contexts.

As a rough generalization, *viññāṇa* signified the particularizing awareness through a sense faculty (as in the standard sixfold division of *viññāṇa* into eye-consciousness, etc) as well as the underlying stream of consciousness, which sustains personal continuity through a single life and threads together successive lives (emphasized at S 12.38-40).

*Mano* serves as the third door of action (along with body and speech) and as the sixth internal sense base (along with the five physical sense bases); as the mind base it coordinates the data of the other five senses and also cognizes mental phenomena (*dhammā*), its own special class of objects.

*Citta* signifies mind as the centre of personal experience, as the subject of thought, volition, and emotion. It is *citta* that needs to be understood, trained, and liberated. For a more detailed discussion, see Hamilton, *Identity and Experience*, ch 5.<sup>375</sup> (S:B 769 n154)

Here *citta*, although rendered as “mind,” can, according to **Brahmavamso**, also be translated as “mind consciousness.” The third and the fourth focusses of mindfulness—on mind consciousness and mind object respectively—can be seen as the “inner” and the “outer” aspects of the mind.

<sup>372</sup> The syntax here is a bit tricky: lit “the monk is aware [knows] here when a pleasant is felt, thus, ‘I feel a pleasant feeling.’”

<sup>373</sup> See PED 266 (*citta*<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>374</sup> Comy says that all these three are names for the mind-base (*man’āyatana*) (SA 2:98). See also Analayo 2003:177 f, 205 n21.

<sup>375</sup> See also Johansson 1965:208, who gives a detailed survey of the different usages of these 3 terms in the suttas.

The “inner” aspect of mind is that which knows, and the “outer” aspect is that which is known. The inner aspect is like a screen, and the outer aspect is what appears on that screen. In this simile, you cannot have a screen without an image on the screen, and in the same way, you cannot have a “knowing” without a “something” that is being known.

(Brahmavamso, 2002:34 = *The Beautiful Mind*, ch 10)

The third focus of mindfulness, **the observing of the mind** (*cittānupassanā*) [C], concerns a group of unwholesome states and a group of higher mental states. **Sujato**, in *A Swift Pair of Messengers*, gives a helpful definition and description of “mind” (*citta*):

“Mind” (*citta*), in Pali as in English, can convey a wide variety of connotations. Here, as will be clarified below, it means specifically “**cognition**,” that is, the faculty of awareness itself, as distinct from associated factors such as feeling, emotion, thought, volition, etc. This inner sense of knowing receives the information conveyed through the senses, supplemented and processed by these associated factors.

As the “lord of the city seated at the crossroads”<sup>376</sup> it is the core of experience; but like any ruler it can maintain its position only with the help of its auxiliaries. The quality of the information received is the critical determinant of the quality of awareness. Also like any ruler, it often seems that the auxiliaries impede rather than facilitate the flow of information. The more we try to see the “boss,” the more we are sidetracked with some underling.

The preliminary stages of this section involve contemplating the mind as colored by the presence or absence of greed, anger, and delusion. These accompanying factors are crude and domineering, and the contemplation necessarily coarse and incomplete. In the later stages the mind is contemplated in its pure form, as “exalted,” “unexcelled,” “concentrated,” “released”—all terms for jhana. Just as the contemplation of feelings culminates with the supreme equanimity of the fourth jhana, here too the term “unexcelled” implies the “unexcelled purity of mindfulness and equanimity” of the fourth jhana.<sup>377</sup> (Sujato 2001:31)

**5C.2 The mind and the unwholesome roots.** All the sutta versions agree on the mindfulness of the unwholesome mental states in terms of the presence or the absence of greed, hate and delusion: this actually forms the preliminary stages of this aspect of contemplation in *satipaṭṭhāna*. The observing of the mind is also treated in the same way in both the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the Vibhaṅga. **Sujato**, in *A History of Mindfulness*, gives further helpful comments:

The contemplation of mind speaks first of understanding the mind with and without greed, anger, and delusion. Normally the abandoning of this classic triad indicates arahantship, but there is no need to assume that here. Sometimes this kind of phrasing is used in straightforward samatha contexts. A passage from **the Aṅguttara** is worth quoting here:

On an occasion, friends, when a noble disciple recollects the Buddha, on that occasion his mind is not overwhelmed with lust, his mind is not overwhelmed with anger, his mind is not overwhelmed with delusion. At that time his mind is upright—departed, released, and risen from greed.

“Greed” is a term for the five kinds of sensual pleasures.

That noble disciple abides with a heart totally like the sky, vast, exalted, measureless, free of hatred and ill-will. Having made this the support, some beings here are purified.’ (A 6.26/SĀ 550)

Notice the pervasive similarities with satipaṭṭhāna, especially contemplation of mind: the practice is a “recollection” (*anussati*); the term “**mind**” (*citta*) is repeatedly used together with lust, hatred, and delusion; doing this, one’s mind is “released”; and the result is the “purification of beings.” Those phrases that are not directly connected with satipaṭṭhāna are mainly related to the divine abidings; but we shall see later that there, too, the connection with satipaṭṭhāna is close and strong. There seems to be little doubt that the subjective aspect of the contemplation of mind is similar to the six recollections.

<sup>376</sup> This simile is from a parable found in **Kimśuka S** (S 35.245/4:194 f).

<sup>377</sup> **Sekha S** (M 53.20-22/1357 f), **Potaliya S** (M 54.22-24/1:367).

The overall context, the progressive structure of the discourse, and the inclusion of the mind “compressed” [*saṅkhitta*] (by sloth) and “scattered” [*vikkhita*] (by restlessness) all suggest that here we are basically dealing with the abandoning of the hindrances on the plane of samadhi, an interpretation confirmed by the commentary.

Here again, as in the contemplation of feelings, a distinctive facet of all the satipatthana material is the direct experience of the “exalted” [*mahaggata*] mind, the “unexcelled” [*anuttara*] mind, the mind “in samadhi” [*samāhita*], the “released” [*vimutta*] mind—all synonyms for jhana. (Sujato 2004b:149 f)

The observing of the mind works toward shedding light in the mind so that the defilements lurking in it are cleared away. Most common amongst these defilements are the five mental hindrances. When these hindrances are overcome, the mind emerges radiant (at least temporarily) as stated in **the Paṇihita Acchanna Vagga** (A 1.5):<sup>378</sup>

Bhikshus, this mind is radiant (*pabhassara*), but it is defiled by adventitious impurities [that “arrive” through the sense-doors]. (A 1.5.9-10; DhA 1:23)

The “radiant mind” (*pabhassara citta*) here is an expression for dhyana.<sup>379</sup> According to Sujato, here “development of mind” seems to be a synonym for “noble right samadhi.”

The significance of the radiant mind is simply this—when the lights are on, a clear-sighted person can see what is there. (Sujato 2001:31)

To the group of unwholesome mental states, the Madhyama Āgama version adds the presence or the absence of a defiled mental state (穢汗, MĀ 98/T1.584a8). The Ekōttara Āgama version mentions the presence or the absence of lustful thought (愛念, EĀ 12.1/T2.568c26).

As for the higher mental states, the Pāli and Chinese versions agree on the mind that is “exalted” [become great] (*mahaggata*), concentrated and liberated, along with their respective opposites [M 10.34]. The Pāli version further speaks of a mind that is surpassable (*sa,uttara*) or unsurpassable (*anuttara*) [M 10.34(6)]. Of special interest here is the term *mahaggata*, “become great,” here referring to the mind

Becoming unrestricted by the boundaries of manifoldness [*papañca*], one sees that *all* manifoldness, including the grossest density of form, is correlated with ignorance [M 1:59]. And one is able there to release, so to speak, one’s dense body from its restrictions.

(Sue Hamilton, 2000:197)

The Madhyama Āgama version mentions additional categories of a low mind or a high mind, or else one that is developed or that is undeveloped, while the Ekōttara Āgama version speaks of a mind that has won attainment, or has become all-pervading, or has become boundless, each together with their opposites.<sup>380</sup> **Anālayo** further notes that

In other Pāli discourses, the qualification “unsurpassable” occurs in relation to the fourth *jhāna* and the gain of full awakening.<sup>381</sup> Hence the unsurpassable state of mind would not seem to be essentially different from the developed mind mentioned in the Madhyama Āgama, or else from the mind that has gained attainment found in the Ekōttara Āgama. (2005:10)

<sup>378</sup> “The chapter on the well-directed and the uncovered.”

<sup>379</sup> See (**Jāta,rūpassa**) **Upakkilesā S** (S 46.33), where the 5 hindrances are respectively compared to iron, copper, tin, lead and silver tainting gold (the mind) (S 46.33/5:93). Also at A 5.23/3:16-19.

<sup>380</sup> MĀ 98/T1.584a8+9: 有下有高 and 修不修; EĀ 12.1/T2.568c28: 有受入, at T2.569a3: 普遍, and at T2.-569a6: 無量. For a survey of a list of states of mind found in a range of works under the third *satipaṭṭhāna* see the detailed research by Schmithausen 1987:318-337, 390-393. He concludes (329) that the categories **lustful, angry, deluded, narrowed/distracted, concentrated and liberated** constitute common ground among the different traditions. [Anālayo’s fn, normalized]

<sup>381</sup> M 53/1:357,23 refers to the fourth *jhāna* as *anuttara upekkhā,sati,pārisuddhi* and at M 1:357,22 to full awakening as *anuttara yogakkhema*. [Anālayo’s fn, normalized]

**5C.3 Three ways of minding.** The insight refrain that follows the exercise of contemplation of mind in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta [§34] says

So he dwells observing the mind in the mind internally,  
or, observing the mind in the mind externally,  
or, observing the mind in the mind both internally and externally.

**The Vibhaṅga**, in commenting on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, helpfully explains these three modes of attention to the mind thus:

**365.** [Contemplation of mind.] **Internally:** Here a monk knows a lustful [mind accompanied by lust] thus, “Lustful mind”... (*idha bhikkhu sarāgam cittaṃ: sarāgam cittaṃ ti pajānāti...*).

**Externally:** Or, here, a monk knows that lustful mind (of another), thus: “That lustful mind”... (*idha bhikkhu sarāgam vā’ssa cittaṃ: sarāg’assa cittaṃ ti pajānāti...*).

**Internally and externally:** Or, here, a monk knows a lustful mind, thus: “Lustful mind”... (*idha bhikkhu sarāgam vā cittaṃ: sarāgam cittaṃ ti pajānāti*). (Vbh 197 f)

In other words, one observes one’s own mind (internally). At other times, as the occasion arises, one observes another’s mind (externally). And in the third method, one observes, at one time, one’s own mind and, at another time, another’s mind. One who is familiar with the meditation object goes back and forth from one object to the other. But there is no combined internal-external object. This similarly applies for the body (Vbh 355/193 f), for feelings (Vbh 363/195 f) and for dharmas (Vbh 367/199-201) [3.7d].

### **(5D) Dhammānupassanā**

**5D.1 Mental hindrances & awakening factors.** The fourth focus of mindfulness, **the observing of dharmas**—like that of the observing of feelings—is worded in the plural: *dhammesu dhammā’nupassī*, “one observes dharmas in the dharmas.” What does “dharma” (dhamma) mean here? It is often translated in meditation context as “mental phenomena” or “mental state” but the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* entails a broader scope than merely “mental phenomena” or “mental state.” In *A Swift Pair of Messengers*, **Sujato** points out that

“Dhammas” in this context appears in its catchall role, encompassing *what* is experienced (phenomena), *how* experience operates (principles), and the meaningful description of experience (teachings). (Sujato 2001:31)

According the Pāli version of the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas, **the observing of dharmas (dhammānupassanā)**<sup>382</sup> deals with the five mental hindrances, the five aggregates, the six sense-spheres, the seven awakening factors and the four noble truths. Both Sujato and Analayo, however, note that **the Vibhaṅga** section on the observing of dharmas has only the hindrances and the awakening factors, a pairing that is quite common in the Pāli Canon.

In relation to this difference it is noteworthy that the Pali **Vibhaṅga** also has only contemplation of the hindrances and of the awakening factors in its exposition of contemplation of *dhammas*.<sup>383</sup> The Vibhaṅga presents this as its exposition following the methodology of the suttas, thereby presenting this as the original instruction found in the discourses.<sup>384</sup>

(Analayo 2005:11)

<sup>382</sup> “Dharmas,” (*dhammā*) here may be rendered as “mind-objects” or “nature of things.” See (5D) n above.

<sup>383</sup> Vbh 199, a presentation that again forms part of the Vibhaṅga’s *Suttanta, bhājanīya*, its “exposition according to the method of the discourses,” different from its subsequent exposition according to the method of the Abhidhamma, the *Abhidhamma, bhājanīya*. [Ven Anālayo’s fn, normalized]

<sup>384</sup> Nyanatiloka 1983:39 however suggests this presentation to be an intentional selection on the part of the Vibhaṅga. Of a similar opinion could also be Thiṭṭila [Vbh:T] 1969:xlīi, since he comments that the “Vibhaṅga makes a bare statement of the four foundations of mindfulness.” [Anālayo’s fn, normalized]

Similarly, of all these contemplations, only the mental hindrances and the awakening factors are found in both the Chinese versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.<sup>385</sup> The observing of the sense-spheres is not found in the Ekōttara Āgama version, but found in the Madhyama Āgama version. The aggregates and the truths do not occur in either of them.<sup>386</sup>

**5D.2 The five mental hindrances.** The observing of dharmas, as such, begins with the observing of the five hindrances [4.2], whether they are present and absent. Each of these five mental hindrances needs to be overcome in different ways as prescribed in the suttas. The hindrances are described with similes in **the Sāmañña-phala Sutta** (D 2)<sup>387</sup> and **the Mahā Assa,para Sutta** (M 39) and its Commentary.<sup>388</sup> In the sutta text, the first hindrance (usually called *kāma-c, chanda*, sensual desire) is called covetousness (*abhijjhā*). The negative effects of the hindrances are stated in **the (Nīvaraṇā) Saṅgārava Sutta**.<sup>389</sup> The five hindrances listed in the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas are briefly described here.<sup>390</sup>

**Sensual desire** (*kāma-c, chanda*) or covetousness (*abhijjhā*) colors the mind like water dyed vivid blue or crimson, making it attractive but opaque. The most important counter-measures are sense-restraint and the meditation on foulness. The sutta Commentary gives six methods for overcoming sensual desire: (1) skilful consideration of an unattractive (*asubha*) object; (2) developing *jhāna*; (3) sense-restraint; (4) moderation in eating; (5) spiritual friendship; (5) helpful conversation (*sappāya, -kathā*). (DA 3:778)

**Ill will** (*vyāpāda*) is a fire which heats the mind until it is boiling, bubbling, and steaming. It is overcome by loving-kindness. In **the Mañi, bhadda Sutta**, the Buddha says:

The mindful is always lucky.  
The mindful prospers happily.<sup>391</sup>  
The mindful one becomes better (day by day)<sup>392</sup>—  
But he is *not* released from enmity.

One whose mind all day and night  
Delights in harmlessness,  
Who has loving-kindness for all beings—  
For him there is no enmity towards anyone. (S vv813, 814/1:208)

<sup>385</sup> MĀ 98/T1.582b-584b and EĀ 12.1/T2.568a-569b. See (1B) n above for details.

<sup>386</sup> Bronkhorst 1985:312 suggests that the 7 awakening factors may have been the most ancient version of this *satipaṭṭhāna*, while Schneider 1992:82 provides reasons for considering the 4 noble truths as the original nucleus of contemplation of *dhammas*. [Ven Anālayo's fn, normalized]

<sup>387</sup> D 2.69-74/1:72 = SD 8.10.

<sup>388</sup> MA 2:318-321 = SD 3.12 (App) = SD 10.13 (App).

<sup>389</sup> S 46.55/5:121-126 = SD 3.12..

<sup>390</sup> Based mainly on Sujato's *A Swift Pair of Messengers*, 2001:31 f.

<sup>391</sup> "Prosper happily," *sukham edhati*. Here Comy glosses it as *sukham paṭilabhati*, "he gains happiness" (SA 1:305). See CPD: *edhati*, where it is defined as (2) "to prosper, increase, grow (freq with *sukham* [adv acc]." It notes tr (2) as "to gain," found only in Comys is probably as misunderstanding of (1) where *sukham* was taken as the direct object; hence the meaning *lābha* for √edh (qv). The original gloss is found in various Comys, eg ThaA 2:93 on **Tha 236** (*sukham edhatī ti... nibbāna, sukham phala, samāpatti, sukhañ ca edhati, pāpuṇāti, anubhavaṭī ti attho*), 3:25 (*uttama, puriso nibbāna, sukhañ ca edhati*); cf J 1:488 (*na edhati na vindati na paṭilabhati*). On **Tha 475**, Norman (Tha:N) notes: "[Comy:] *sukhedhito ti, sukha-saṁvaddhito*. MA 3:291 (on **M 2:56**) explains: *sukhedhito ti, sukham edhito, sukha-saṁvaddhito*. VA 1:204 (on **V 3:13**) explains: *sukhedhito ti sukkena edhito, sukha, saṁvaddhito*. Since *sukhaidhita* is quoted for Skt (MW), there seems to be no need to doubt the existence of the compound and emend to *sukhe thito* as PED suggests." Brough, on Gāndhārī Dharmapada **Dh:G 173** (*suhu modadi*) and it cognate at **Dh 193** (*sukham edhati*), notes: "In the last pāda, the [**Udāna, varga**], with *sukham edhate*, agree with the Pali, and there can be no doubt that the Prakrit [*suhu modadi*] is a later alteration (and in the original form *sukham modati* would presumably have been unmetrical). On the sense of the verb, see P Thieme, *Sanskrit edhate* (Indian Linguistics, Turner Jubilee vol 1:149-158), who renders the Pali line [*taṃ kulam sukham edhati*] fittingly as 'that family is radiant with happiness.'" (Dh:G, Brough 1962:234).

<sup>392</sup> *Satimato suve seyyo*. Comy glosses *suve seyyo* as *suve suve seyyo, niccam eva seyyo*, lit "It is better morrow after morrow, it is always better."



**Sloth and torpor** (*thīna, middha*) are like a moss and weed suffocating the clear waters of the mind. It is overcome by initiative, by putting forth effort, by sustained exertion, by non-complacency; the recommended meditation subject is the perception of light.

**Restlessness and worry [remorse]** (*uddhacca, kukkucca*) are like turbulent winds that lash and stir up the mind into ripples and waves. Restlessness (*uddhacca*) manifests itself as the inability to stay with one mental object for a long time.

Calm (*samatha*) should be cultivated to abandon restlessness. (A 6.116/3:449)

The mindfulness of breathing should be cultivated to abandon a scattered mind (*cetaso vikkheppa*). (A 6.115/3:448 f)

**Worry [remorse]** (*kukkucca*, literally “bad-done-ness”) is chiefly worry over breaches of moral virtue. Restlessness runs on to the future; worry dredges up the past. Their antidote, keeping the mind content in the here and now, is bliss, that is, the pervasive drenching of the whole field of awareness with serene, sublime, sustained ecstasy.

**Doubt** (*vicikicchā*) makes the mind turbid, muddy, and dark. It is overcome by “paying attention to the root” or “wise attention” (*yoniso manasikāra*) (A 1.2/1:4 f). The “root” or basis of meditation is simply the meditation object itself. Unwavering continuity of application defines the object, dispelling doubt. It is worth noting that mindfulness is nowhere singled out as a mental factor capable of effecting the abandonment of any hindrance. Only when working together with the other factors of dhyana could mindfulness overcome a mental hindrance.

The mental hindrances can only be properly observed on *after* one has abandoned them. Mindfulness (*sati*) includes memory, and can take as its object an experience that has already passed. Mindfulness as such can take up a previous example of sensual desire and watch it long enough to penetrate into its true nature. What one’s mindfulness will notice is that each of these five hindrances are only momentary events, mere instances of still images that appear to move on a screen so that they are nor “mine” nor have anything to do with “me.”<sup>393</sup> **The Danta, bhūmi Sutta** (M 125) says:

Having thus abandoned these five hindrances, the imperfections of the mind that weaken wisdom, he abides observing the body in the body... feelings in the feelings... a mind in the mind... dharmas in the dharmas...

Then the Tathagata leads him higher (*uttarim vineti*):

“Come, monk, abide observing the body in the body, but do not think thoughts of sensual desire.

Abide observing feelings in the feelings, but do not think thoughts of sensual desire.

Abide observing the mind in the mind, but do not think thoughts of sensual desire.

Abide observing dharmas in the dharmas, but do not think thoughts of sensual desire.”

With the stilling of initial application and sustained application of mind, he enters and abides in the second dhyana... (M 125.22-25/3:136, condensed)<sup>394</sup>

The Danta, bhūmi Sutta then goes on to deal with the exercise of observing the rise and fall of the five aggregates.

**5D.3 The seven awakening factors.** In the suttas, the awakening factors are often contrasted with the five mental hindrances—especially as **the Āhāra Sutta** (S 46.51)<sup>395</sup>—since with the removing of the hindrances, real mental progress begins. The awakening factors arise sequentially, beginning with mindfulness, each serving as the condition for next and building up upon the previous factor, as shown in **the (Bojjhaṅga) Sīla Sutta** (S 46.3).<sup>396</sup> The progress of the awakening factors occur as the practice of the last three factors of the noble eightfold path, namely, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration, guided by right view, but they represent this part of the path in finer detail, the factors working together leading one to liberation.

<sup>393</sup> Brahmavamsa 2002:35-38. See Gethin 2001:36-44.

<sup>394</sup> See Bodhi’s n (M:ÑB 1338 n1177).

<sup>395</sup> S 46.51/5:102-107 = SD 7.15.

<sup>396</sup> S 46.3.4b-11/5:67-59 = SD 10.1

First, one mindfully attends to a meditation object, usually one of the satipatthana practices based on the body, feelings, mind, or dharmas: this is the awakening factor of mindfulness (*sati sambojjhaṅga*). As mindfulness deepens, one learns to see the object's features more clearly, and is able to distinguish between the wholesome and unwholesome states of mind as they arise: this is the awakening factor of dharma-investigation (*dhammavicaya sambojjhaṅga*).

As one investigates the dharmas as they arise, one's effort is roused as the awakening factor of effort (*virīya sambojjhaṅga*).

This effort continues to fire the work of mental purification, leading to profound joy, that is, the awakening factor of zest (*pīti, sambojjhaṅga*).

As the zest is refined, the body and mind calm down even more: this is the awakening factor of tranquillity (*passaddhi sambojjhaṅga*).

A tranquil mind easily gains samadhi, that is, the awakening factor of concentration (*samādhi sambojjhaṅga*).

With a concentrated mind, one calmly looks on at phenomena as they rise, remain momentarily and fall away: this is the awakening factor of equanimity (*upekkhā sambojjhaṅga*).

Each of the awakening factor arises, supporting those that follow, except for zest, which subsides as concentration deepens. Thus, at the mature stage of mental development, all the seven factors are present at the same time, each contributing in its own way.

While the (Bojjhaṅga) Sīla Sutta give a diachronic or vertical model—spiritual progress over time—the **(Bojjhaṅga) Aggi Sutta** (S 46.53)<sup>397</sup> presents a synchronic or horizontal model, in terms of balancing the progress. The seven awakening factors fall into two categories: the activating and the restraining. **The activating awakening factors** arise first: dharma-investigation, effort and zest. **The restraining awakening factors** emerge later: tranquillity, concentration and equanimity. The activating factors are to be cultivated when the mind is sluggish, just as one stokes a small fire so that it flares up. The restraining factors are to be cultivated when the mind is restless, just as one sprinkles water or wet grass on a blaze so that it dies down. As in the five spiritual faculties, **mindfulness** acts independently, moderating the activating and the restraining factors, ensuring that they are kept in balance.<sup>398</sup>

**5D.4 Three ways of observing dharmas.** The insight refrain that follows each of the five exercises of observing dharmas in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta [36-45] says

So he dwells observing dharmas in the dharmas internally,  
or, observing dharmas in the dharmas externally,  
or, observing dharmas in the dharmas both internally and externally.

This three ways of observing dharmas are in fact the theme of **the Dhammānupassī Sutta** (A 6.118), which, despite its title, deals with all the four “stations” of mindfulness, but further mentioning six things that one has to let go of so that one could dwell

observing **the body** in the body within;  
observing the body in the body without;  
observing the body in the body within and without;

observing **feelings** in the feelings within;  
observing feelings in the feelings without;  
observing feelings in the feelings within and without;

observing **the mind** in the mind within;  
observing the mind in the mind without;  
observing the mind in the mind within and without;

observing **dharmas** in the dharmas within;  
observing dharmas in the dharmas without;

<sup>397</sup> S 46.53/5:112-115.

<sup>398</sup> See SD 10.1(4).

observing dhammas in the dhammas within and without. (A 6.118/3:450)

**The Kāyānupassī Sutta** (A 6.117) lists “the six things that one has to let go of before one can dwell observing the body in the body,”<sup>399</sup> namely,

delighting in activity (*kamm'ārāmatam*);  
 delighting in talk (*bhass'ārāmatam*);  
 delighting in sleep (*nidd'ārāmatam*);  
 delighting in company [socializing] (*saṅgaṇik'ārāmatam*);  
 delighting in not guarding the sense-doors (*indriyesu agutta,dvārataṃ*);  
 delighting in not being moderate in one's food (*bhojane amattaññutam*). (A 6.117/3:339 f)

**The Vibhaṅga**, in commenting on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, helpfully explains these three modes of attention to the dhammas thus:

**367.** [Observing dhammas.] **Internally:** Here, when there is an internal sense-desire, a monk knows, “There is in me internal sense-desire”... (*idha bhikkhu santam vā ajjhattam kāma-c,chandaṃ: atthi me ajjhattam kāma-c,chando ti pajānāti...*).

**Externally:** Or, here, when there is that sense-desire (of another), a monk knows, “That sense-desire exists”... (*idha bhikkhu santam vā'ssa kāma-c,chandaṃ: atthi'ssa kāma-c,chando ti pajānāti...*).

**Internally and externally:** Or, here, when there is sense-desire, a monk knows, “There is sense-desire”... (*idha bhikkhu santam vā kāma-c,chandaṃ: atthi kāma-c,chando ti pajānāti...*). (Vbh 199-201)

In other words, one observes one's own dhammas (internally). At other times, as the occasion arises, one observes another's dharma (externally). And in the third method, one observes, at one time, one's own dharma and, at another time, another's dharma. One who is familiar with the meditation object goes back and forth from one object to the other. But there is no combined internal-external object. This similarly applies for the body (Vbh 355/193 f), for feelings (Vbh 363/195 f) and for dhammas (Vbh 367/199-201) [3.7d].

**5D.5 Observing the mind & observing dhammas compared.** Sujato raises some important points here, and due to their importance, are quoted in full here:

The Vibhaṅga section on contemplation of dhammas has the hindrances and enlightenment-factors only, a pairing that is by now becoming familiar. Unlike the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, here there are no introductory and concluding sentences to separate and define each section, such as: “And how does one abide contemplating a dhamma in the dhammas regarding the five hindrances?” The hindrances and enlightenment-factors simply run on into each other. (Such sentences are found in **the Dharmaskandha**, but the Sarvāstivāda **Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra** has only the concluding sentences; this is perhaps the only point at which the Dharmaskandha is closer to the Theravāda **Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta**.) Otherwise, however, the phrasing is identical with the Sutta.

The contemplation of the five hindrances and seven enlightenment-factors would seem to be primarily a samatha practice, and invites consideration as to how exactly this section differs from the previous sections. For example, the first two hindrances are sensual desire and ill-will, which seem to simply repeat the contemplation of “mind with lust” and “mind with anger.”

But if we look closely, some subtle differences make themselves evident. The first thing is that in **the contemplation of mind**, the direct object of contemplation was the mind itself; the qualities of the mind, such as lust, hatred, etc, function as adjectives qualifying the mind. This suggests that the prime focus in this contemplation is the nature of knowing itself, the cognitive power of awareness in various conditions. In **the contemplation of dhammas**, the direct object of contemplation is not the mind, but the associated mental qualities—sensual desire, etc. (Sujato 2004:150)

<sup>399</sup> *Cha bhikkhave, dhamme pahāya bhabbo kāye kāyānupassī viharitum.*

**5D.6 Observing dharmas and breath meditation.** An examination of the observing of dharmas in connection with breath meditation is helpful here. In the 16 stages of the **the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta** (M 118),<sup>400</sup> the observing of dharmas comprises the following: observing impermanence; observing fading away (of lust); observing cessation (of suffering); and observing letting go [relinquishment] (of defilements). This section from Sujato’s discussion on the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta is very instructive:

In the **Ānāpāna,sati Sutta**, as well as both the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda **Saṃyuttas**, we are told that developing *ānāpānasati* develops the four satipaṭṭhanas, developing the four satipaṭṭhanas develops the seven enlightenment-factors, and developing the seven enlightenment-factors leads to liberation. This reminds us of the “**inference according to dhamma**” we met above,<sup>401</sup> as well as the meditative phase of the gradual training.

The connection between *ānāpānasati* and the enlightenment-factors here also helps us to understand the disparity in the description of contemplation of dhammas in *ānāpānasati* and satipaṭṭhana. Whereas *ānāpānasati* has “impermanence, fading away of lust, cessation, relinquishment,” satipaṭṭhana has a list of various dhammas. These include, in all versions, the seven enlightenment-factors.

The standard passage on these says they are “dependent on seclusion, dependent on fading away of lust, dependent on cessation, maturing in relinquishment.” This passage is in fact found in the Mahāsaṅghika **Ekāyana Sūtra**, one of the existing versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. This suggests that the contemplation of dhammas in *ānāpānasati* is related to the enlightenment-factors, a relationship it will be worth considering further.

**The fourth tetrad of *ānāpānasati*** observes impermanence; but the impermanence of what? The most plausible approach would relate this to the inner structure of the meditation itself. The whole course of *ānāpānasati* emphasizes a gradual, progressive stilling, appeasement, ending of activities. The breath is calmed and becomes very subtle and fine. The endless chatter of thinking is stilled and one experiences ever more refined bliss and tranquillity. The hindrances end and the clamour of sense impingement fades away. This successive stilling defines the course of the meditation, the entire world of the meditator’s experience at that time, and must surely constitute the prime field for understanding impermanence. An interesting perspective is thrown on this by the phrase, which we have already quoted above, describing this contemplation of dhammas in *ānāpānasati*:

Having seen with understanding the abandoning of covetousness & aversion, he watches over closely with equanimity... (S 54.10/SĀ 813, S 54.13/SĀ 810, M 118.23 ff)

“**Covetousness & aversion [displeasure]**” obviously harks back to the satipaṭṭhana auxiliary formula.<sup>402</sup> In the Satipaṭṭhana Sutta, the section on contemplation of dhammas starts with the five hindrances. The first two of these are sensual desire and ill-will, which we can infer from this passage are similar or identical with “covetousness & aversion.” Seeing the abandoning of these “with understanding” suggests the focus on causality that is characteristic of this section; the same word “abandoning” also occurs in the contemplation of dhammas, in reference to the abandoning of the five hindrances.

The contemplation of dhammas also includes **the seven enlightenment-factors**, and these are frequently said to be the forces that can overcome the five hindrances. So it is noteworthy that our current text finishes by saying that one should “**watch with equanimity**”; for equanimity is the last of the enlightenment-factors. This passage, then, could be read as suggesting

<sup>400</sup> See SD 7.13 (Ānāpāna,sati S), esp Introd §1d.

<sup>401</sup> “Inference according to the Dharma” (*dhamm’avyaya*), alt tr “the drift of the Dharma.” See Sujato 2004: 134. This refers to **Nālandā S** (S 47.12), where Sāriputta declares that there is none wiser than the Buddha. When the Buddha questions him how he could know this, Sāriputta replies that “it is known through the drift of the Dharma” (S 47.12/5:160). This episode is also found, without the last para, in **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16.1.16/ 2:82), but the sequence here is questionable (see D 16.1.16 = SD 9 n). The **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28) gives a more elaborate version.

<sup>402</sup> *Satipaṭṭhāna* auxiliary formula, see §3.6.

that the contemplation of dhammas is fulfilled by understanding how the hindrances are abandoned through the strength of the enlightenment-factors, and with the fulfilment of this process one dwells in equanimity. This in turn suggests that the development of *ānāpānasati*, and hence satipatthana, will fulfil the enlightenment-factors, culminating in equanimity, which is a central theme of the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, from which this passage was taken.

Compared with the conservative, incremental evolution the teachings on satipatthana underwent in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta*, the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* appears as an unpredictable quantum leap. It is instructive to compare this with the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*. This contains no new teachings, being merely a presentation of material from the *Ānāpānasati-saṃyutta* with a more elaborate setting. In other words this is a more normal teaching, taught more often.

In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* we see, not a dainty step up in size like in *ānāpānasati*, but a massive blow-out in several directions at once. First, each of the four satipatthanas is expanded into a detailed exercise or series of exercises, few of which occur elsewhere in the context of satipatthana. Then each exercise is followed by a lengthy section dealing with insight. This is substantially similar to the insight section in **the Samudaya Sutta** of the *Sarvāstivāda Saṃyukta*. Given the strong conservatism that is obvious in the treatment of satipatthana in every other context, I find it very difficult to accept that on this one occasion the Buddha departed so radically from his policy. This leads me to suspect that the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as we have it is the end result of a process of textual accretion. And when we look at teachings on satipatthana outside the four *Nikāyas* we do indeed find some concrete support for this idea.

(Sujato 2004:146 f; normalized)

**5D.7 Investigation into causality.** Sujato goes on to shows how the observing of dhammas has to do with an investigation into causality:

... Far more obvious is the introduction of a more detailed investigation into causality in this section. This may be most graphically represented in a table. We may compare the contemplation of mind and [of] dhammas, keeping the translation as literal as possible.

It becomes obvious that the chief difference in the mode of contemplation is the final three sentences in the contemplation of dhammas. This is clearly an investigation into causality, into the reasons behind the rise and fall of the various good and bad qualities; an investigation, moreover, that is attuned precisely to removing the cause and abandoning forever the bad qualities.

Observing Mind	Observing Dhammas
One understands mind with lust as “mind with lust.”	There being internal sensual desire, one understands “There is for me internal sensual desire.”
One understands mind without lust as “mind without lust.”	There not being internal sensual desire, one understands “There is not for me internal sensual desire.”
	And one understands how the unarisen sensual desire comes to arise.
	And one understands how the arisen sensual desire comes to be abandoned.
	And one understands how the abandoned sensual desire comes to not arise in the future.

**Observing the mind and of dhammas (Sujato 2004b Table 13.2)**

For **the enlightenment factors**,<sup>403</sup> of course, the situation is changed: one is to understand how the enlightenment-factors come to arise, and how they are developed to fulfilment.

<sup>403</sup> The enlightenment factors or awakening factors (*bojjhaṅga*) are: mindfulness, dharma-investigation, effort, zest, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity. For details, esp the two applications of dharma-investigation (*dhamma, vicaya*)—in the teaching and in the meditation contexts—see **Bojjhaṅga Sīla S** (S 46.3) = SD 10.1(1).

As is made clear elsewhere, the causes for abandoning the hindrances are precisely the enlightenment-factors; and the causes for obstructing the enlightenment-factors are precisely the hindrances. Thus these two sets of dhammas are intimately intertwined, the light and shadow of the mind.

This, then, is the prime distinguishing feature of the contemplation of dhammas, the investigation into causality. This, of course, is **vipassana**, and it is here in the contemplation of dhammas that vipassana finds its rightful home in satipatthana. We have seen that in *ānāpānasati*, too, the contemplation of dhammas may be read as contemplating the impermanence and interrelationships of the hindrances and enlightenment-factors.

But this is, of course, not a “dry” vipassana, not an insight that is divorced or separated from samatha. Quite the opposite: it is an insight that emerges from understanding the principles of samadhi, why the mind is sometimes radiant and peaceful and sometimes caustic and fractured. But the mind in meditation, we learn through the constancy of satipatthana practice, is no different in nature from the mind outside of meditation: it’s just the mind. So learning to understand the process of meditation one is learning to understand the mind.

As the insight through contemplation of dhammas matures and deepens it will naturally broaden to encompass all states of mind, all that is knowable, and will ripen in the deepest insights. So the presentation of contemplation of dhammas in the Vibhaṅga is highly convincing as a natural depiction of the meditative process.

In the Vibhaṅga, each section is integrated with the internal/external contemplation, here elaborated slightly from the standard form found in the Saṃyutta. One is to cultivate, develop, make much of, and clearly define body contemplation internally before progressing to body contemplation externally, and so on each stage step by step.

Then follows a word definition, obviously a later, distinctively abhidhammic addition. Most of the definitions, or rather, strings of synonyms, are standard enough. “**World**” is defined thus:

This very body [feeling, mind, dhamma] is the world; also the five aggregates associated with grasping are the world.

The mechanical nature of these definitions is shown up by the gloss on *domanassa*, which follows the normal meaning of “sadness,” failing to recognize the contextual meaning here of “aversion.” Certain Sutta material is absent from the Vibhaṅga: there are no similes, which in Abhidhamma literature is to be expected. More significantly, there is no vipassana refrain, in striking contrast to the well-integrated internal/external refrain. (Sujato 2004b:150 f)

**5D.8 Observing dharmas: a comparative study.** **Anālayo**, in his comparative study of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, further makes these insightful observations on the contemplations of dharmas:

...**the Śāriputrābhidharma** lists the hindrances, the sense-spheres, the awakening factors and the four noble truths under its exposition of the same contemplation.<sup>404</sup> This results in a surprising situation, since the southern Abhidhamma appears more closely related to the presentation found in the Chinese agamas, while an Abhidharma work of the northern tradition is fairly close to the presentation found in the Pali discourses.

For the Śāriputrābhidharma to be close to the Pali version of contemplation of *dhammas* is less surprising, since this work belongs to the Dharmaguptaka tradition, a tradition whose presentations are often fairly similar to their Pali counterparts.<sup>405</sup>

Other works of the northern tradition differ more decisively from the Pali presentation of

<sup>404</sup> T1548/T28.616a20, T28.616a25, T28.616b3 & T28.616b8. The presentation of contemplation of the four noble truths found in the *Śāriputrābhidharma* is similar to the short version of this contemplation found in the PTS and Sinhalese eds of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (M 10/1:62,21). The *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (D 22/2:304-315), and the Burmese and Siamese eds of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, present the same observing in a more elaborate way, commenting on each aspect of the first and fourth noble truth in detail and applying the second and third noble truth to a series of stages of the perceptual process at each sense-door. [Ven Anālayo’s fn, normalized]

<sup>405</sup> Cf. Przyłuski 1926:315, Waldschmidt 1926:187, Waldschmidt 1932:229 and Waldschmidt 1980a:149.

contemplation of *dhammas*, such as **the Jñānaprasthāna**, an Abhidharma work of the Sarvāstivāda tradition, which quite closely resembles the account found in the Madhyama Āgama belonging to the same tradition.<sup>406</sup>

What, however, remains a puzzle is why the account of contemplation of *dhammas* found in the Pali Vibhaṅga should differ to such a degree from the Pali discourses. The same was already the case in regard to the exposition found in the same work of contemplation of the body.

The Vibhaṅga treats a number of other topics, each time presenting first an examination from the perspective of the discourses, followed by treating the same topic from the perspective of the *Abhidhamma*. These topics range from the five aggregates and the six sense-spheres to the four noble truths, the four right efforts, the four roads to power, the seven factors of awakening and the *jhanas*. In all these instances, the Vibhaṅga's treatment from the perspective of the discourses succeeds in succinctly covering the relevant information found in the discourses.

Hence **the Vibhaṅga's treatment of *satipaṭṭhāna*** stands out as the only instance where substantial parts of the exposition found in the discourse are absent from the Vibhaṅga's treatment of the same matter. In the case of the body contemplations[,] this becomes all the more puzzling, since the development of clear comprehension in regard to various bodily activities, which forms part of the instructions in the two Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas and is missing from the exposition of body contemplation according to the methodology of the discourses in the Vibhaṅga, occurs in the same work as part of its exposition of the *jhanas* [Vibh 244,7]. Thus the brevity of the Vibhaṅga's exposition of the two *satipaṭṭhānas*, concerned with contemplation of the body and of *dhammas*, is puzzling indeed.

In evaluating the different presentations of the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna* found in the Pali and Chinese discourses and later works of both traditions, it seems difficult to come to a definite conclusion. Their agreement certainly points to the importance of overcoming the hindrances and developing the factors of awakening as central topics of contemplation of *dhammas*,<sup>407</sup> an importance explicitly highlighted in the introductory part of the *Madhyama āgama* version. Other Pali and Chinese discourses agree that these two mindfulness practices, together with the development of *satipaṭṭhāna* (self evident in the present context), are indispensable conditions for awakening.<sup>408</sup> This is the case to such an extent that the same three practices constitute a common feature of the awakening of past, present and future Buddhas.<sup>409</sup>

(Analayo 2005:11 f)

## 6 The practice of satipatthana

**6.1 SEQUENCE OF PRACTICE. The Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**<sup>410</sup> of the Pāli Canon present a progressive sequence of the focusses of mindfulness as follows, namely, the contemplation (*anupassanā*) [A] of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), [B] of feelings (*vedanā'nupassanā*), [C] of the mind (*cittānupassanā*), and [D] of dharmas (*dhammānupassanā*).

(A) the body	(B) feelings	(C) mind	(D) dharmas
1 the breath	7 awakening factors	9 ordinary states	11 hindrances
2 postures	8 noble truths →	10 higher states →	12 aggregates
3 bodily activities			13 sense-spheres
4 body parts			14 awakening factors
5 elements			15 noble truths
6 bodily decay →			

**Fig 6.1** Progression of the satipatthana exercises

<sup>406</sup> T1544/T26.1023b29, cf also Schmithausen 1987:336.

<sup>407</sup> Thanissaro 1999:74 suggests that the presentation in the Vibhaṅga and the Chinese discourses indicates that all observing of *dhammas* "appear to be variations on the abandoning of the hindrances and the development of the factors of awakening." (Analayo's fn)

<sup>408</sup> A 10.95.5:195,11 ≠ DĀ 17/T1.75b10.

<sup>409</sup> S 47.12/5:160,27 ≠ SĀ 498/T2.131a11.

<sup>410</sup> D 22; M 10.

The progressive sequence of practice begins with the observing of the body, ranging from the full awareness of bodily postures and activities to the body parts. The heightened awareness is then directed towards the observing of feelings, that is, the awareness moves from the immediate physical aspects of one's bodily activities to more refined objects of contemplation. The feelings as noted accordingly as being pleasant, painful, or neutral, and also as sensual or non-sensual.

The observing of the mind proceeds from examining the presence or absence of four unwholesome mental states (lust, anger, delusion and distraction) to contemplating the presence or absence of four higher states of mind. These latter contemplation includes a detailed investigation of those factors that hinder deeper meditation—the mental hindrances, which are the first object of the observing of dharmas. This fourth contemplation goes on to two analyses of subjective experience, that is, the five aggregates and the six sense-spheres. These are followed by the awakening factors and culminate with the observing of four noble truths, the full understanding of which constitutes awakening.

In this connection, **Analayo**, in a footnote in his *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path of realization*, quotes **Étienne Lamotte** from his French translation of **the Ta chih-tu Lun** (Mahā Prajñā, pāramitā Śāstra), Kumārajīva's 5-volume translation of the Commentary on the Perfection of Wisdom in 25,000 lines. Here, the Śāstra offers the following explanation for the satipatthana pattern mentioned above:

Having investigated the body, the meditator searches for the cause of attachment to it, which is found to be pleasant feeling. Investigating feelings the question “who experiences feelings?” arises, leading to contemplation of the mind. This in turn forms a basis for an inquiry into the causes and conditions of mind, being the focus of contemplation of *dhammas*.

(Lamotte 1970:1158, 1162, 1167; qu by Analayo 2003:20 n11)<sup>411</sup>

In practice, most meditators of satipatthana would be flexible in contemplating all aspects of his experience. In fact, the meditator would take the practice as an integrated whole with all the four satipatthanas mutually supporting each other.<sup>412</sup>

**6.2 OTHER ASPECTS OF PRACTICE.** In **the (Satipaṭṭhāna) Vibhaṅga Sutta** (S 40.10/5:183), the Buddha explains how mindfulness is to be set up by regarding each focus of mindfulness as having the nature of arising (*samudaya*), the nature of passing away (*vaya*) and the nature of both arising and passing away (*samudaya, vaya*) [3.8]. This reflection could be done at any time during satipatthana, but is best applied after one has emerged from dhyana.

**A comprehensive meditation practice** comprises three steps:

- (1) the abandoning of the five mental hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇā*),
- (2) the calming of the mind through the four satipatthanas (*cattāro satipaṭṭhāna*), and
- (3) the proper development of seven awakening factors (*satta bojjhaṅga*).

This is, in fact, the method used by all the Buddhas, past, present and future, as noted by Sāriputta in his lion-roar and confirmed by the Buddha himself (**Nālandā Sutta**, S 47.12/5:159-161).<sup>413</sup> “That the five hindrances should be counteracted by both the seven enlightenment-factors and the four establishments of mindfulness is perfectly comprehensible when we realize that the first enlightenment-factor is mindfulness itself, which is activated by the development of the four establishments of mindfulness.” (S:B 1507).

However, there are **social and psychological aspects** of satipatthana practice not often stressed by modern meditation teachers. In **the Sedaka Sutta** (S 47.19), the Buddha makes it clear that through satipatthana practice, one effectively guards oneself and guards others. Conversely, “by patience (*khanti*), harmlessness (*avihiṃsā*), lovingkindness (*mettā*) and caring [active compassion] (*anudayatā*)”<sup>414</sup> one guards others, and so guards oneself—in this way, there is mutual safety.<sup>415</sup> And

<sup>411</sup> On this progressive *satipaṭṭhāna* pattern, see also Ariyadhamma 1994:6; Gethin 1992:47; Guenther 1974: 219; Khemacārī 1985:38; King 1980:67; and Meier 1978:16.

<sup>412</sup> See Analayo 2003:21-26.

<sup>413</sup> SD 12.18. This sutta is an abridgement of **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28/3:99-116). On Vipassī's awakening, see above §3.10.

<sup>414</sup> Comy: The last 3 are the first 3 divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) of compassion (*karuṇā*), lovingkindness (*mettā*) and altruistic joy (*muditā*) (SA 3:227). See S:B 1925 n170.

<sup>415</sup> S 47.19/5:169 = SD 12.19.



in the (Satipaṭṭhāna) **Mittā Sutta** (S 47.48), the Buddha exhorts his disciples thus: “Those for whom you have compassion and who think you should be heeded—whether friends, colleagues, or relatives—you should have them undertake, dwell in, establish themselves in the cultivation of the four focusses of mindfulness.”<sup>416</sup>

**6.3 UNITY OF THE SATIPATTHANAS.** Here I will summarize the satipatthana practice in lay terms. The Buddhist training is a gradual one, beginning from the known to the unknown, from the easy to the more difficult. This is not a reflection of one’s own being and abilities, not even that of the reality to be realized. True reality reveals itself, as it were, when the layers of defilements are peeled off, like removing the onions scales layer by layer. In the end, we do not see a “true onion,” not even the “original face” of the onion, but “emptiness,” that is, not-self—that there is nothing substantial behind all existence. The purpose of satipatthana practice is to realize this reality and so be truly liberated from ignorance and suffering.

Satipatthana begins with the most obvious and palpable, the physical body. The practitioner then progresses to watch how when the body interacts with the external world: how feelings arise, and then how the mind responds to such feelings. Finally, he observes the dharmas (the nature of things) as they arise in one’s mind.

There are, however, other ways of applying these four satipatthanas. **The Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**,<sup>417</sup> **the Ānāpāna,sati Sutta**<sup>418</sup> and **the Kāya,gatā.sati Sutta**<sup>419</sup> give three of the best known methods of satipatthana practice. The Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas provide a “traditional” scheme of practice, contemplating progressively, as it were, beginning with watching the body, then feelings, followed by the mind, and finally dharmas. The Ānāpāna,sati Sutta uses the watching of the breath (= the body) as the basis for satipatthana practice, watching all satipatthanas as the occasion demands. The Kāya,gatā.sati Sutta focusses on the first satipatthana, watching the body, to which all the other three satipatthanas are applied in due course.

The basic pattern of mental focussing in all these suttas are identical. The satipatthanas, as the focussing the mind, keeps away mental distractions [5D.2] and in due course abandons all the mental hindrances [5D.4] (albeit temporarily, by way of suppression or displacement of mental distractions). Dhyana then sets in [3.1]. With the onset of dhyana, one then emerges from it and re-views the satipatthanas in greater clarity and depth. If this is properly done, one then abandons the mental hindrances by cutting them off [4.2c], and so one hits path to sainthood.

The key practice at the centre all the satipatthanas, or more exactly, at the moment of being distracted or after a spell of deep focus, is the perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*) [3.8]. Indeed, the perception of impermanence can be practised by itself at any time, alongside the cultivation of lovingkindness (which the Buddha exhorts one to maintain “as long as the mind is undrowsy”).<sup>420</sup>

Although the four satipatthanas are traditionally given in the sequence: watching the body, feelings, the mind, and dharmas, once the practitioner is familiar and adept with the practice, insight or liberation may arise at any point. The essential unity of the four satipatthanas is evident from this simile at the end of **the Kimbila Sutta** (S 54.10):

Suppose, Ānanda, at a crossroads there is a great mound of soil. If a cart or chariot were to come from the east,...from the west,...from the north,...from the south, it would flatten that mound of soil.

So, too, Ānanda, when a monk dwells contemplating the body in the body,...feelings in the feelings,...the mind in the mind,...dharmas in the dharmas, he would “flatten” evil unwholesome states. (S 54.10/5:325)<sup>421</sup>

The Commentary explains that the six sense-bases are like the crossroads; the defilements in the six senses are like the mound of soil there. The four satipatthanas occurring in regard to their four objects are like the four carts or chariots. The destruction (*upaghāta*) of evil unwholesome states is like the

<sup>416</sup> S 47.48/5:189 = SD 12.20.

<sup>417</sup> **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22) = SD 13.2; **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10) = SD 13.3.

<sup>418</sup> M 118 = SD 7.13.

<sup>419</sup> M 119 = SD 12.21. See above §5A1.

<sup>420</sup> **Metta S** (Sn 151).

<sup>421</sup> SD 12.22.

flattening (*upahana*) of the mound of soil by the cart or chariot. (SA 3:273). As **Analayo** notes,

This simile suggests that each *satipaṭṭhāna* is in itself capable of overcoming unwholesome states, just as any of the chariots is able to scatter the heap of dust. At the same time, this simile also illustrates the cooperative effect of all four *satipaṭṭhānas*, since, with chariots coming from all directions, the heap of dust will be scattered even more.

Thus any single meditation practice from the *satipaṭṭhāna* scheme is capable of leading to deep insight, especially if developed according to the key instructions given in the “definition” and “refrain” of the discourse. Nevertheless, an attempt to cover all four *satipaṭṭhānas* in one’s practice does more justice to the distinct character of the various meditations described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and thereby ensures speedy progress and a balanced and comprehensive development. (Analayo 2003:23)

## 7 How to enter the path in 1 week

It is easy to take the Buddha’s closing remark out of context, that

whoever were to cultivate these four focusses of mindfulness in this way for just **one week**, without doubt one of two fruits is to be expected: either arhathood in this very life or, if there is any residue [substrate] of clinging left, non-return. (D 22.22; M 10.46)

Understandably, those who without proper instructions at once embark on “satipatthana” meditation find that even after a week, they are not awakened. This is simply because, as **Brahmavamso** points out, they fail to take into account the phrase, *evam bhāveyya*, “were to cultivate...in this way” (or “in such a way,” as Brahmavamso renders it) (2002:14 f).

The key phrase *evam bhāveyya* (“were to cultivate...in this way”) refers to *ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā, domanassam* (having removed covetousness and displeasure for the world, he dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, (contemplating the body in the body,... dharmas as dharmas)) [4.2].<sup>422</sup> Brahmavamso gives this analysis in tabular form thus:

- (1) *Vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassam*—having abandoned the five hindrances through an experience of dhyana.
- (2) *Satimā*—possessed of super power mindfulness as a result of that dhyana.
- (3) *Ātāpī*—through effort [ie the 4 right efforts],<sup>423</sup> having the ability to sustain that mindfulness unwavering on the object.

According to Brahmavamso, there are two types of *satipaṭṭhāna* taught by the Buddha.

The first is supported by *jhāna*...and leads to awakening in a short time. The second, without *jhāna*, produces valuable insights, especially insights which enable you to let go and come closer to *jhāna*, but not Awakening. Both types are found in the Suttas. (2002:15)

In the light of what has been said regarding satipatthana and dhyana so far, it is therefore clear that one need *not* have to cultivate dhyana before the practice of satipatthana, although dhyana certainly helps one in such an endeavour. Even if one is unable to attain dhyana, one should continue in the practice of satipatthana, especially through sense-restraint (*indriya, samvara*). As **Sujato** points out [4.3],

The coarse levels are abandoned through the preliminary practices, especially sense restraint, while the full overcoming occurs with the abandoning of hindrances on entering jhana. It would, therefore, be a little over-strong to insist, as some do, that the phrase “having removed desire and aversion for the world” implies that one must attain jhana before doing satipatthana; the phrase is simply too vague to bear such a definitive interpretation.

(*A History of Mindfulness*, 2004b:114)

<sup>422</sup> Gethin discuss this basic formula in *The Buddha Path to Awakening*, 2001:47-53.

<sup>423</sup> See (**Cattāro**) **Padhānā S** (D 33.1.11(10)/3:225 = A 4.14/2:16 f) = SD 10.2 (2005) Introd.

It is interesting to note that the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, when counting down to “one year,” it is not followed by “eleven months,” but by “seven months” (D 22.22; M 10.46). This indicates, Analayo proposes, “that the sequence does not follow mathematical logic” (2003:251). In fact, there are scholars who think that the “prediction” should not be taken literally. The Pali-English Dictionary, for example, says that the number 7 has a “peculiar magic nimbus” in Pali (PED 673), and Louis Dumont states that “the number seven... indicates a totality” in ancient India (1962:73). In this light, we could take the number 7 in a symbolic or mythical sense of auspicious totality, “indicating simply a complete cycle of time” (Analayo 2003:281). This symbolic use of the number 7, for example, is evident in **the (Puñña) Mettā Sutta** (A 7.58a):

For seven years I cultivated thoughts of lovingkindness. Having cultivated a heart full of lovingkindness for seven years, I did not return to this world<sup>424</sup> for seven aeons<sup>425</sup> of world-contraction and world-expansion.<sup>426</sup> (A 7.58a/4:88-91 = SD 2.11)

Those who have attended meditation retreats, especially for the first few times, would notice that it generally takes three days to really settle down into meditation. Such retreats tend to run for at least seven days, if not longer. Then again there are those who immediately settle in once sit in meditation.

The Chinese versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas (**MĀ 98; EĀ 12.1**), for example, state that the benefit of satipatthana may occur within a single day or night. **The Bodhi,rāja Kumāra S** (M 85) similarly states the possibility of gaining awakening within a single day or night, by way of developing “the five factors of striving” (*pañca padhāniyaṅga*) (M 85.58-59/2:95 f). The wanderer **Bāhiya Āgama** also mentions nuns in this connection, as does **Bhikkhuni Vāsaka Sutta**,<sup>427</sup> where nuns are highlighted as accomplished practitioners of *satipaṭṭhāna* [4.3b].<sup>429</sup>

## 8 The knower and the doer

**8.1 MIND CONSCIOUSNESS (*citta*)**. In his teachings, Brahmavamso introduces two very useful terms: “the knower” for the mind or mind consciousness (*citta*) and “the doer” for the will (*cetanā*). When with mindfulness one examines pure **mind consciousness**, it is seen not as a smooth flow of thoughts, but as a series of discrete events. It is like sand on a beach when looked from a distance gives one the impression of a continuous beach. When one examines it closely enough, one notices there are empty spaces amongst the grains of sand.

In his famous “**fruit salad analogy**,” Brahmavamso (2002:32 f) shows how a series of fruits singly appears on a plate one after another, but each time a “coconut” appears before the next fruit (that is, coconut—fruit—coconut—fruit—coconut etc) where the “fruit” represents an event of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, or body. Since mind consciousness (“coconut”) appears alongside every other species of consciousness, it gives the illusion of sameness to every conscious experience.<sup>430</sup> To the average person, there is a quality in seeing that is also present in hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. It is this quality that is called the “**knowing**.”

Deep mindfulness, however, will show that this “knowing” is not part of seeing, hearing, etc, but arises a moment after each type of sense-consciousness. This “knowing” has vanished when, say, eye-consciousness is occurring, and eye-consciousness has vanished when “knowing” (mind conscious-

<sup>424</sup> AA: He had attained to the absorptions with lovingkindness and thus did not return to this world, that is, the sense sphere (*kāma, loka*).

<sup>425</sup> “Aeon,” *kappa*, is divided into 4 phases of cosmic expansion, stable state, cosmic contraction, stable state (A 4.156, 7.62). **The Pabbata S** says that an aeon would last longer than it would take a man (assuming he is long-lived) to wear down a mountain a league (7 mi=11.25 km) high, a league wide, a league round by stroking it once a century with a fine muslin (S 15.5).

<sup>426</sup> Buddhist cosmology speaks of a “pulsating” universe, that is, in modern terms, a cycle “big bang,” steady state, “big crunch,” steady state, ad infinitum. See **Brahmajāla S** (D 1.2.1-3).

<sup>427</sup> **Bāhiya S** (U 1.10/8) = SD 16.5.

<sup>428</sup> S 47.10/5:154-157.

<sup>429</sup> Analayo 2005:13, 251-253.

<sup>430</sup> This mind consciousness (“coconut”) here, in the Abhidhamma tradition, is called *bhav’āṅga*. See Gethin 1998:215-218.

ness) is occurring. Contemplating consciousness in this manner, rids one of the illusion that there is a “knower” present. As such, it cannot be “me,” “mine” or a self—that which knows or *citta* is finally understood as not self (*anattā*).

**8.2 THE WILL (*cetanā*).** The contemplation on the will comes under the observing of the five aggregates [38 f]. The will is “that which does” or “the doer.” A person under hypnosis, for example, will execute a pre-suggested instruction on cue but would swear that he had done it on his own “free will.” In other words, brainwashing appears to the brainwashed as free will. “You are deluded to assume,” Brahmavamsa warns humorously, “that you are reading this of your free will. My friend, you had no choice but to read this! **Will is not the action of a being, it is the end product of a process.**” (2002:37).<sup>431</sup>

*Satipaṭṭhāna* practice is for the purpose of realizing non-self (*anattā*). The two last resorts of the notion of a self or soul are in the knower and the doer, “the two citadels of the illusion of the self” (2002: 33). If one identifies with anything as the essential “you,” it will be one or both of these. One assumes that one is what one does and what one knows. These two deep-seated delusions stand between one and awakening. When one sees through this delusion one is a stream-winner; when one sees through these delusion permanently, one is an arhat. (Brahmavamsa 2002:32 f, 36 f)

## 9 Related suttas

The importance of the focusses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is further shown by the presence of two whole sections on the topic: **the Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta**,<sup>432</sup> comprising 42 pages of the PTS edition of the Saṃyutta Nikayā and **the Anuruddha Saṃyutta**,<sup>433</sup> totalling 13 pages (with a grand total of 55 pages). **The Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta** contains three suttas spoken by Anuruddha that are similar to those found in the Anuruddha Saṃyutta, “and it is unclear why they were not taken out and brought into this collection.” (S:B 1515). **The Ambapāli Sutta (S 47.1)** is an abridged version of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and is the first sutta in the Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta,<sup>434</sup> which contains various variations of teachings based on *satipaṭṭhāna*. **The Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta**<sup>435</sup> does not contain any detailed analysis of *satipaṭṭhāna* itself, but presents various interesting suttas that treat *satipaṭṭhāna* either generally or each of the four contemplations on their own.

**The Anuruddha Saṃyutta**<sup>436</sup> presents Anuruddha as an exponent of satipatthana, which features in every sutta of the collection. It is possible that this collection originally belonged to the Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta, but was given independent status. The very first sutta of the Anuruddha Saṃyutta, **the Rahogata Sutta 1**,<sup>437</sup> has been said to be “the most complex *vipassanā* analysis yet.”<sup>438</sup> It merges into one complex pattern the two extensions of the *satipaṭṭhāna* formula concerned with insight, one dealing with the observing of the four bases as internal and external, and the other with the observing of the four bases as having the nature of arising and ending. Each section is appended with the insight refrain (or expanded satipatthana formula) [3.7]. In fact, notes Sujato, “this is the only place where the *vipassanā* section is embedded within the *satipaṭṭhāna* formula itself.” (2004b:143)

While the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta has only one paragraph on the noble truths [44], **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (D 22)** gives them a very detailed exposition.<sup>439</sup> Otherwise, these two suttas are identical. This elaboration of the section on the noble truths in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta clearly shows that the dhyanas (*jhāna*) (as right concentration)<sup>440</sup> are a vital part of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation.

The new material (on the truths) is almost identical to **the Sacca Vibhaṅga Sutta (M 141)**,<sup>441</sup> but

<sup>431</sup> See “Free will and Buddhism” = SD 7.7.

<sup>432</sup> S 47/ 5:141-192.

<sup>433</sup> S 47.26-28/5:294-306.

<sup>434</sup> S 47/5:141-192.

<sup>435</sup> See Bhikkhu Bodhi’s useful introd in S:B 1504-1508.

<sup>436</sup> See Bhikkhu Bodhi’s useful introd in S:B 1515 f.

<sup>437</sup> S 52.1/5:294-296 = SD 12.17.

<sup>438</sup> Sujato 2004b:143.

<sup>439</sup> D 22.18-21/2:305-314. For a more detailed discussion on **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** and Satipaṭṭhāna S, see Gethin 2001:44-53.

<sup>440</sup> D 22.21(viii).

<sup>441</sup> See SD 11.11.

the second and third noble truths receive a much more detailed analysis in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The noble truths are analyzed in a manner similar to the twelve-factor (*dvādas'ākāra*) framework of the **Dhamma, cakka-p, pavattana Sutta**,<sup>442</sup> a late canonical composition that is probably also based on the Sacca, vibhaṅga Sutta. Each of these truths are tagged to each of the following ten dharmas, repeated for each of the six sense-fields, namely, the internal sense-faculties (*indriya*), the external sense-objects (*āyatana*), the sense-consciousnesses (*viññāna*), the sense-contacts (*samphassa*), feelings (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*sañcetanā*), craving (*taṇhā*), initial application (*vitakka*), and sustained application (*vicāra*).<sup>443</sup>

The Buddha is recorded as reflecting on the four focusses of mindfulness as *ekāyana, magga* soon after his awakening, and Brahmā Sahampati (a non-returner) appears before him and sings its praises in verse.<sup>444</sup> The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta should be studied in connection with other important texts, namely, the **Ānāpānasati Sutta** (M 118) which contains its earlier sections, and the **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda Sutta** (M 62).

Using the framework of satipatthana, the sutta covers practically all the important doctrines of the Buddha related to meditation, Buddhist psychology and ministry to the sick. In the **(Satipaṭṭhāna) Salla Sutta** (S 47.4/5:144 f), the Buddha recommends the practice of satipatthana to novice monks (*navakā*)<sup>445</sup>, trainees and even arhats. Novice monks (and the laity) are to practise the focusses of mindfulness to know the body, feelings, mind and phenomena as they really are, that is, to arouse the insight for attaining the transcendental path. Learners (*sekhā*), that is, those who have attained sainthood short of arhat-fruit, are to practise them to fully understand these objects of contemplation so as to reach full arhat-hood. Arhats practise them, detached from the body, feelings, mind and phenomena.

The **Sakuṇagghi Sutta** (S 47.6/5:146-149) and the **Makkaṭṭa Sutta** (S 47.7/5:148 f) declare that the four focusses of mindfulness are the proper resort and domain of a monk. Those who stray from them into “the cords of sensual pleasures” (*kāma, guṇā*) fall under Māra's power, but those who remain within the focusses of mindfulness are out of Māra's reach.<sup>446</sup>

## 10 Historical developments

**10.1 SUTTA EVOLUTION.** In 2004, at the Buddhist Fellowship in Singapore, **Sujato** gave a public talk on the historical development of the satipatthana tradition. Later that year, he revised his talk into a ground-breaking paper entitled *A History of Mindfulness*.<sup>447</sup> Early in his opening chapter, Sujato recounts the serious issues that have prompted him to speak out, since “silence is no option” as regards the truth of the teaching:<sup>448</sup>

I was first alerted to the possibility of historical change in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta by AK Warder. He notes the existence of versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta in ancient Chinese translations. After recording the major differences he notes in connection with the contemplation

<sup>442</sup> S 56.11, V 1:10-12.

<sup>443</sup> The **Samyutta Nikāya** includes a similar list, although it has the elements (*dhātu*) and the aggregates (*khandha*) for the final two members of the list, rather than initial application and sustained application. Sujato notes: “Several of the *samyuttas* [S 18, 25, 25, 26, 27] containing this series are missing from the Sarvāstivāda **Samyukta**. Nevertheless, a similar list, again omitting the final two members, is found in the Sarvāstivāda **Satya Vibhaṅga Sūtra**. The only place I know of where the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna list occurs verbatim in the four Nikāyas is in the ‘repetition series’ appended to the Ānguttara sevens [7.80 ff]. Such sections are usually to be regarded as late, and in the present case the whole passage is ignored by the commentary. These considerations suggest the list, even in its simple form, is probably late.” (Sujato 2005:176)

<sup>444</sup> **Brahmā Sutta**, S 47.18/ 5:167; **Magga Sutta**, S 47.43/5:186 f.

<sup>445</sup> I have rendered *navaka* (lit “new”) or *navaka, bhikkhu*, lit “new monk,” as “novice monk,” and rendered *sāmaṇera* simply as “novice.”

<sup>446</sup> On suttas related to the importance of satipatthana in the preservation of the dispensation, ie, keeping the true teaching alive, see the conclusion to this Introduction [14].

<sup>447</sup> See biblio.

<sup>448</sup> In all the references from Sujato here and elsewhere in the SD series, their referencing, the diacritics have been normalized, and emphases added.

of dhammas that ‘the original text simply opposed these good principles [awakening factors] to the obstacles.’<sup>449</sup> (Sujato 2004b:4)

The evolution of the material analysing the truths<sup>450</sup> in detail was: **Sacca,vibhaṅga Sutta** → **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** → **Vibhaṅga**. At each stage more material was added. It seems that some of the material added in the final Vibhaṅga version then found its way back into the Burmese (VRI) Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. This includes possibly “association with the disliked is suffering, separation from the liked is suffering,” and certainly the addition of “the cutting off of the life faculty” to the definition of death. This material then filtered down to the Burmese Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and “the cutting off of the life faculty” even made it back into the Sacca,vibhaṅga Sutta, thus “devolving” in this way: **Vibhaṅga** → **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** → **Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta/Sacca,vibhaṅga Sutta**. (Sujato 2004b:75)

**10.2 ORAL TRADITION.** Why the Buddha lived, and in the after-centuries when arhats walked the earth, it was possible to find personal verification and admonition from a living authority. The Buddha and the early saints taught orally and wrote no books. **Sujato** observes

... we might wonder why the texts were originally transmitted orally rather than being written down. It seems that writing was known in the time of the Buddha, but was used largely for personal letters, or for government and trade purposes; the Brahmins jealously monopolized their sacred texts, so were adamantly opposed to writing them down. Originally the Buddhists followed suit, no doubt partly because the discipline of memorizing texts was good for mindfulness; indeed, the same word, *sati*, is used to mean both “memory” and “mindfulness.”

But later, due to a combination of factors—social instability, new technology such as the palm-leaf manuscript, the spread of Buddhism along the trade routes—the texts were written down. This innovation in information technology may be reckoned around 20 BCE in Sri Lanka, the date recorded in the Mahāvamsa for the writing down of the Pali canon.

There is no record of when the texts were first written down on the mainland, but we can guess that it was probably over a similar period. No doubt the shift from memorizing to writing was a gradual one; indeed, the oral tradition is still alive today. The new format facilitated the development of radically new styles of literature, especially the very long and elaborate sutras and treatises of later Buddhism. Many passages extol the copying, preservation, and worship of the written manuscripts, which is of course a dead give-away as to the lateness of the Sutras in which such passages appear. (Sujato 2004b:10)

The main advantage of the oral tradition is that one has to *listen* carefully to the teacher. Or, often the Buddha would give a cue for the audience to listen to the teaching, such as, “Well then, Ānanda, listen and pay close attention, I will speak” (*tenah’ānanda suṇāhi sādhuḥkaṃ manasikarohi bhāsisāmi ti*).<sup>451</sup> There is a dialogue and interchange between the teacher and the listener, so that the listener receives the right dosage of attention and teaching resulting in right understanding and effective healing, and even awakening.

However with the popularization of writing, the secularization and vulgarization of spirituality inevitably follows. Anyone who could write could transform a living tradition into dead letters, or scribal errors could arise, or one could write a new sutta—or one could revise ancient teachings to suit the times or one’s biases.

One problem leads to another, more serious, problem (or one might regard this as the *result* of the first problem). Books attract readers, but the seeker is alienated when he only reads the teaching and does not personally (*sammukha*) meet receive teachings from a wise living teacher and who could guide him in personal spiritual practice. Without this vital interaction, he has no way of straightening his wrong views, and is sadly led by preconceived notions and latent tendencies. Or worse, as he

<sup>449</sup> AK Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, 2002:86 fn.

<sup>450</sup> Traditionally known as **Sacca,pabbāṃ** (the chapter on the truths), it covers D 22.17-21/2:304-313, taking just over 9 pages (with *peyyāla*) of the 16 and a half pages of the sutta itself.

<sup>451</sup> S 54.10.5/5:323.

keeps on shopping for books and teachers, he would one day meet just the right guru to who endorse his wrong views and biases in glorious codependence.

**10.3 PROCRUSTEAN REVISION.** In the history of every religion, specialists and followers are often wary of how their sacred texts have been handed, that is, they regard those teachings that go back to their founders or fathers of the faith to be authentic. Even though it is basically about the past, it is impossible to bring it back or to go back into the past to ascertain what really happened. Even ancient artifacts, historical records or oral traditions are not always reliable or authentic criteria of what really happened. History—the official view of events—is often written the powerful (who are not always awakened beings) or twisted by the ambitious for their own agenda.

The problem is compounded when the later defenders of the faith (or those who take upon themselves such a role) have no regard for basic principles of a critical study of texts. Simply put, any text, especially a sacred text, needs to be approached bearing in mind the original intentions of their author (or authors). In the case of early Buddhism, this problem becomes more complex as the Buddha gave only oral teachings, but which, fortunately, were codified into an oral tradition (*mukha,pāṭha*) within a century of his passing.

However, other problems arose when this oral tradition reached Sri Lanka, when around 20 BCE, the Pali Canon was written down in the Ālu Vihāra in Matulā Janapada. While the oral tradition has internal safeguards of prosody (principles of versification),<sup>452</sup> the written word remains as merely dry ink on dead wood, unless brought back to life by a wise teacher or true practitioner. Otherwise, the dead letters are left to the follies of the untrained eye or the machinations of the cunning mind. Or worse, some eager hand could produce new “revisions” of the ancient texts. **Sujato**, in his unexpurgated version of *A History of Mindfulness* graphically and gravely describes his personal experience:

The dhammas section in the Majjhima version [of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta] closes with a brief enunciation of the four noble truths. This is then expanded greatly in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya.<sup>453</sup> Some of the recent Burmese recensions have re-incorporated this entire section from the Dīgha Nikāya back into the Majjhima Nikāya, and even acknowledge this provenance by re-titling it the “Mahā Satipaṭṭhana Sutta.” Perhaps a better title would be the “Piltdown Sutta.”

This canonical innovation is extraordinary. While it is common for a word or phrase to slip between the cracks, I do not know any other place where a large body of text has been moved, obviously in fairly recent times. No doubt this editorial outrage was perpetrated with the idea of further exaggerating the already overblown status of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. But the result is rather the reverse—such clumsy mishandling leaves all-too-obvious fingerprints at the scene of the crime.

The altered version is found in the so-called “Sixth Council” edition published by the Vipassana Research Institute, but was inserted earlier, for the notes to the PTS Pali (edited in 1888) state that the Burmese manuscript includes under the four noble truths “a passage of some length, borrowed from the Mahā Satipaṭṭhana Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya’.<sup>454</sup> This possibly refers to the Fifth Council edition. There is a Pali work called Saṅgāyanā,pucchā,-vissajjanā (included in the VRI CD), which gives the questions and answers on the texts as spoken in the Council, although it doesn’t say which Council—presumably it is the Fifth or Sixth. This also includes the “Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta” in the Majjhima, and has the temerity to assert that because of its great usefulness to meditators this text was recited “twice” “in detail” by the redactors in ancient times. While most other discourses rate a bare mention in this work, the Mahā (sic!) Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is distinguished by detailing the contents of the meditation exercises.

A similarly obvious bias is apparent in the Vipassana Research Institute’s online version of the Tipiṭaka. Under the contents table of the Majjhima Nikāya, almost all discourses are

<sup>452</sup> The oral tradition basically relies on chanting (which is a rhythmic vocalization between singing and talking), and, like a tuneful song, it is easy to detect when any word or line is wrong or missing.

<sup>453</sup> D 22

<sup>454</sup> Majjhima Nikāya, Vol. 1, PTS, pg. 534. The preface lists a number of similar interpolations from the Dīgha into the Burmese Majjhima, but none are of any length or doctrinal significance.

simply listed by their title; but the Mahā (sic!) Satipatthana Sutta is again singled out by individually listing all twenty-one sections. The meditative bias of those who have put together these recensions of the Tipiṭaka are well known: the questioner at the Sixth Council was Mahasi Sayadaw, the founder of the main “dry vipassana” meditation system; and the VRI Tipiṭaka was put made by the followers of the Goenka tradition, the other main vipassana school.

Although Buddhists are generally a charmingly placid lot, I think we should not take such crudely partisan manipulation of our sacred scriptures lying down. Protest! I did—I sent an e-mail to the VRI alerting them to this alteration and requesting that they restore the Majjhima version of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. But there was no reply. Does no one care? The only good thing to emerge from this blatant sectarian revision of the Tipiṭaka is that no one can reasonably insist that the Tipiṭaka must have remained unchanged for all time. (2004b:175 f)

**10.4 PROMISE OF RESULTS.** Insofar as a Buddhist system promises some form of spiritual liberation that is other than or better than the current unsatisfactory state of worldly affair, it can be regarded as a religion. Such a religion is like medicine that can heal if taken in the right dosage and in keeping with the physician’s instruction. The secret of such a religion’s success lies in how it is marketed, but the product description can sometimes be very bizarre and misleading to say the least.

Probably the single greatest factor in the success of the *vipassanā, vāda* is **its promise of results**. A recent biography of one of the greats of the movement states that, for a reasonable intelligent and diligent meditator, it takes an average of three weeks of intensive vipassana to realize stream-entry, the first stage of enlightenment. Earlier, **the Mahasi centre** in Yangon [Myanmar] actually used to give out certificates of attainment, but this practice was stopped.

I have heard that one of the senior teachers at the prestigious **Insight Meditation Centre** [Barre, Massachusetts, USA] said in private that he believed that a substantial percentage of meditators will attain the Dhamma in their retreat, which is the chief justification for the whole system of intensive dry vipassana.

I find it puzzling that sincere, intelligent people can buy into such spiritual materialism. I myself was indirectly but unambiguously certified as attained at a vipassana centre after my first retreat, though I never took it seriously. It does not take much acquaintance in these circles to start hearing of meditators who doubt the attainments granted them by their teachers—so much for “crossing over doubt.”<sup>455</sup>

Needless to say, it is difficult to hold a rational dialogue in such a culture of overestimation, where it is taken as axiomatic that one’s teacher, and probably oneself, too, has seen the Dhamma, and that to question their teaching is to cast aspersion on their spiritual attainment. In all fairness, overestimation is also rampant in *samatha* circles; but someone who mistakenly believes they have *jhāna* at least should understand that they must continue to practice.

Recently, we have also seen the strange sight of western vipassana teachers who claim that one can be enlightened but still suffer from psychological problems. [They claim that] Dhamma isn’t enough, one must seek answers on the analyst’s couch. It does not seem to occur to these teachers, supposedly endowed with unshakeable faith in the Triple Gem, to wonder whether it might not be the Dhamma, but their understanding and practice of Dhamma that is incomplete. This is not to question the mutual benefits of dialogue and interaction between psychology and Buddhism, but to question certain motives and approaches that shape the scope of that interaction.

As our appreciation of the Suttas matures in both theory and practice, it is to be expected that the vipassanā, vāda will wither away. It will come to be regarded as a 20<sup>th</sup> Century curio, the strange case of how the most orthodox of orthodoxies somehow managed to convince the world that the Buddha taught a seven-fold path. The vipassana schools will quietly transform their message, and will drop their dogma in favour of a more balanced and authentic approach. It might still be purveyed under the slogan “vipassanā,” but the special teachings of the

---

<sup>455</sup> A sensitive, thinly fictionalized, account is given in the final chapter of Kate Wheeler’s *Not Where I Started From*.



*vipassanā, vāda* will no longer predominate. In this way we may reap the genuine benefits of this diligent approach to mindfulness training, without having to swallow the mythology.

(Sujato 2004b:218)

**10.5 “CONTEMPLATION WILL ALWAYS BE A THREAT TO ORTHODOXY.”** In such an expose, in all its honesty, compassion and wisdom, a lot of feathers would be ruffled for various reasons. The traditionalists may be offended by the thinking that their well-known ideas and teachings have been seriously challenged; the professionals may feel threatened that such revelations might affect their clientele and income. As such, it is important to understand **the open spirit of this study**:

In making such claims, claims that will inevitably be perceived as an attack on the authority of some of the most respected 20<sup>th</sup> Century meditation schools, I cannot say emphatically enough that what I am criticizing here is not the teachers of vipassana, or the meditation techniques that are marketed as “vipassana,” but the textual sources of the vipassanā, vāda, the doctrine that vipassana is the central meditation taught by the Buddha. The vipassanā, vāda must be understood in its historical context, for it is this, rather than the textual sources, that shape its essential features.

The vipassanā, vāda grew up as part of the movement of ‘modernist Buddhism’, which started in the colonial era as the schools of Buddhism attempted to respond to the challenges of the modern age. This movement swept over the whole of the Buddhist world in a number of guises. In all its varieties, however, the key aspect of modernist Buddhism was rationalism.

Meditation, especially samatha, was suspect, since in traditional Buddhist cultures it had often degenerated into a quasi-magical mysticism. Samatha is emotional rather than intellectual. It cultivates the non-rational aspects of consciousness, and so when it degrades it shades off into psychic tricks, fortune-telling, magic, and so on, all of which are rampant throughout Buddhist cultures. Some forms of Buddhist modernism did away with meditation altogether; this may be compared with the Protestant movement in Europe, which similarly opposed the contemplative aspect of religion.

**Contemplation will always remain a threat to religious orthodoxy**, since there is always the uncomfortable possibility that the truth a meditator sees may not agree with the truth that the books say they’re supposed to see. However, in Buddhism, unlike Christianity, the contemplative life lies at the very heart of the Founder’s message.

Other modernist Buddhism movements, perceiving that Buddhist meditation was based on a rational psychology, developed contemplative systems that emphasized these aspects. These schools, originating mainly in Burma, marginalized or outright disparaged samatha and developed the *vipassanāvāda* as a scriptural authority for their ‘vipassana-only’ approach. The strength of these schools is that they have rightly championed an energetic and disciplined approach to meditation. But with our advancing knowledge and appreciation of the Buddhist scriptural heritage, the scriptural authority for their special doctrines lies in tatters. Followers of these contemplative schools would do well to be a little more humble in their claims, and to emphasize the demonstrable practical benefits of their practices, rather than rely on a discredited theory.

I am well aware that my claims fly in the face of virtually every modern interpreter of satipaṭṭhana. Such an accumulated weight of authority cannot be discarded frivolously. At the risk of appearing pedantic and perhaps obsessive, I must proceed very carefully. I will therefore attempt to make my coverage as comprehensive as reasonably possible, casting an eye at every available important early text on satipaṭṭhana, as well as a range of later passages.

I consciously flirt with the danger of polemicism, of simply asserting one extreme in reaction to an original extreme. But everyone, no matter how ‘objective’ or ‘scientific’, has their own agenda, and it is more honest to be open with one’s perspectives than to pretend—to others or to oneself—that one has no bias. The concern here is not so much for balance within this particular work, but for balance within the tradition as a whole. (Sujato 2004b:82)

## 11 The root Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

**11.1 TROUBLING QUESTIONS.** Sujato, in the foreword to his revolutionary work, *A History of Mindfulness*, recalls:

I was first alerted to the possibility of historical change in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta by **AK Warder**. He notes the existence of versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta in ancient Chinese translations. After recording the major differences he notes in connection with the contemplation of dhammas that “the original text simply opposed these good principles [enlightenment-factors] to the obstacles.”<sup>456</sup> It is through such seemingly innocuous remarks that I have become cognizant of the truly momentous significance of the comparative study of the Nikayas and Agamas.

While the Theravāda Nikāyas will forever remain our primary source for exploration of pre-sectarian Buddhism, the **Āgamas** of the contemporary Sarvāstivāda Dharmaguptaka, and other schools, which are preserved in ancient translations in the Chinese canon, provide an essential and under-utilised check on the Pali.

As the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism puts it: “In our days it is impossible for any scholar to refer to early Buddhism unless he pays due regard to the comparative study of the southern and northern traditions.” I would be gratified if this survey could at least demonstrate that the early Nikāyas/Āgamas are not a mined-out field whose treasures are all safely housed in the later compendiums.

In the Nikāyas/Āgamas it is obvious that no one text pretends to present an all-encompassing, definitive exposition, so each text must be considered in relation to the collection as a whole. This raises questions of the overall structure and organization of the canon. I began to suspect that the shorter texts in the Samyutta may preserve an earlier perspective on satipaṭṭhana, a perspective that in some respects was better reflected in the Chinese versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta than in the Pali.

My suspicions were further aroused by a comment by **Bhikkhu Varado** to the effect that the compilers of the Abhidhamma Vibhanga were lax in omitting much of the material from the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Maybe, I wrote back, they weren't lax at all—maybe the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta had not been written when the relevant portions of the Vibhanga were compiled. (I later found out that I was not the first to raise this question.) This suggested that I should take account of the early Abhidhamma texts as well as the Suttas, overcoming, in part, my prejudice that the Abhidhamma was a late and sterile body of sectarian dogmas. And then, if the early Abhidhamma period overlapped with the composition of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, it seemed likely that sectarian agendas would be involved in the settling of the final text.

This called for a closer examination of the ways the emerging sectarian disputes found expression in the early texts. It then seemed appropriate to extend the survey to the later Abhidhamma/commentarial period, to try to gain a deeper insight into the ways the traditions adapted satipaṭṭhana to their own particular perspective on the Dhamma, and to bridge the gap between the Buddha's time and our own. (2004b:4 f)

**11.2 THE OUTER LIMITS.** Sujato is, of course, not alone in his observations and concern. In 2003, **Analayo** published his well-acclaimed study, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization*, where he observes:

...the detailed instructions found in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta apparently belong to a later period, when the Buddha's teaching had spread from the Ganges valley to the distant Kammāsadhama in the Kuru country, where both discourses were spoken. (2003:26) [1b]

It is indeed strange that such an important discourse should have been given *only* in such an obscure, far-away place. **The Kuru country**—with its famous ancient capitals of Hastina, pura (NE of Meerut) and Indra, prastha (near modern Delhi)—probably marks the westernmost limits of the Buddha's peregrinations. **Sujato** further notes:

Stranger still that the discourse would have been given twice [at the same venue], with only the expansion of one section differentiating them. In fact, it seems not merely strange but

<sup>456</sup> Warder, 2000:86 fn.

incredible that the Buddha should have taught only the basic pericope<sup>457</sup> in all his years at Sāvathī, etc, and in one of his rare visits to the border countries he gave such a vastly elaborated teaching, not once but twice. Were the students in the main centres to be left high and dry for all those years, deprived of the key for fully understanding satipatthana?

This reinforces our contention that the shorter, mainstream teachings on satipatthana found especially in the Saṃyutta should be more closely examined, and that the longer discourses should be seen in this light. (2004b:85)

**11.3 THE OLDER THE SHORTER. The Āgama versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta**, too, are much shorter than their Pāli counterparts, which means that it is most likely the Āgama versions,<sup>458</sup> being shorter, are the older ones. In the various cognate and parallel texts of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as found in the Pāli and Chinese sources,<sup>459</sup> they all point to the importance of overcoming the hindrances and developing the factors of awakening. However, there are a number of important differences amongst the various ancient texts, as **Analayo** points out:

To draw further conclusions, based on comparing the different versions of the fourth *sati-paṭṭhāna*, seems to meet with difficulties. A convenient example for such difficulties is the case of mindfulness of the five aggregates. Since this contemplation occurs only in the Pali discourses and is absent from all parallel versions as well as from the presentation found in the Pali *Vibhaṅga*, mindfulness of the five aggregates would seem to be a prominent candidate for exclusion from what should be considered as authentic practice of contemplation of *dhammas*.

Yet such an exclusion would stand in opposition to the testimony of numerous other Pali discourses, according to which mindfulness of the impermanent nature of the five aggregates stands out as an important contemplation for gaining awakening.<sup>460</sup> This is the case to such an extent that the Buddha spoke of the same practice as his “lion’s roar” of instruction.<sup>461</sup>

According to Chinese, Pali and Sanskrit versions of the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*, even the former Buddha *Vipassī* gained awakening through this very mindfulness practice.<sup>462</sup> Hence rather than attempting to derive an “original” version of this *sati-paṭṭhāna* by excluding practices lacking support from other versions, it seems preferable to take the differences between the various versions as bringing out the richness of satipatthāna practice, indicating the broad range of possible ways how the basic principle of mindful observation of *dhammas* can be put into actual practice. (Analayo 2005:11 f)

## 12 Uses and abuses of Buddhism

**12.1 SATIPATTHANA AND SOCIETY.** The Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas, especially the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, are not only the most important suttas on early Buddhist meditation, they are also the most manipulated, misquoted and misused of Buddhist texts. In concluding *A History of Mindfulness*, **Sujato** expresses his compassionate concern by offering a few reflections on “the place of satipatthana and meditation in general in the broader social fabric of Buddhism”:

I think it would be foolish to assume that the textual and doctrinal patterns that I have unveiled in the course of this work [*A History of Mindfulness*] should leave no trace in the Buddhism of today. On the contrary, it was precisely because I saw certain puzzling imbalances and tensions in the living Buddhist communities that motivated me to look more closely into the sources.

<sup>457</sup> “Only the basic pericope,” ie only the main repetitive or stock passages.

<sup>458</sup> MĀ 98/T1.582b-584b and EĀ 12.1/T2.568a-569b.

<sup>459</sup> See Analayo’s n at (5D) above.

<sup>460</sup> Cf D 33 at D 3:223,17; S 12.23/2:29,26; A 4:41/2:45,24; and A 8.2/4:153,13. Gethin 1986:43 comments that the instructions (corresponding to the practice of mindfulness of the five aggregates described in D 22 and M 10) occur “especially in contexts where the process of the gaining of that insight that constitutes the destruction of the *āsavas* is being described.” (Analayo’s n, normalized)

<sup>461</sup> S 22.78/3:85,16.

<sup>462</sup> D 14/2:35,15; T 3/T1.156b20; and the Skt version in Waldschmidt 1956:146. (Analayo’s n, normalized). On Vipassī’s awakening, see §3.10.

When reading **Seneviratne's** *The Work of Kings*,<sup>463</sup> a book on the sociology of contemporary Sinhalese Buddhism, an obscure footnote struck me as summarizing exactly the process I had observed in the evolution of the satipatthana material.

The study of Buddhism as a thought system is the precursor to its objectification, its acquisition as part of the paraphernalia of nationalist resurgence, its fetishization, and ultimately its use as an instrument of oppression. (Seneviratne, 1999:311 n42)

Seneviratne's work is mainly concerned with Sinhalese Buddhism. According to his observations, the study of Buddhism as a thought system stems from the decision by the Theravāda in Sri Lanka that study and preservation of the Pāli texts is more important than their practice. As a result of this decision, there is thenceforth very little evidence that meditation ever played a significant part in the life of mainstream Theravāda.

The objectification is blatantly literal in this case, for it was also at this time that the texts were written down. Thus, rather than being inscribed in the heart, available for constant reflection, scrutiny, and practice, now the texts were inscribed on palm-leaf scrolls, and could be safely placed on the shrine and worshipped...

In Indian Buddhism, the study of Buddhism as a thought system began with the Abhidhamma period. Here the categories of the Dhamma were being operated upon and juggled with, rather than being lived. The obsessive repetitions and systemization are less apparent in other schools, but are very characteristic of the Theravāda, not just in their Abhidhamma, but even in their additions to the Suttas, such as the "Ganges repetition series"<sup>464</sup> in the Saṃyutta, or the second and third noble truths sections in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

This textual objectification of the Dhamma parallels the emergence of the corresponding philosophical objectification, the Abhidhamma definition of a "dhamma" as that which "has its own inherent essence." This conceptual revolution reified the phenomena of experience into really existing things "out there" in the mysterious realm of "ultimate truth."

We have already noted that the Sarvāstivāda evolved **their doctrine of time** by taking statements made by the Buddha that the Dhamma (nature of reality) is the same in the past, future, and present, and interpreting them to mean that dhammas (phenomena) exist in the three times. This reification of time is paralleled in the ontological reification of **the dhamma theory**, and for the same reason: grief and distress over the passing of the Buddha, prompting an obsessive preoccupation with preserving the most tangible reminder of his presence, that is, his words, even at the expense of fossilizing the spirit.

The consummation of the twin reification of the written Dhamma and the dhammas of ultimate reality occurs in **the Visuddhimagga and commentaries**. These make the claim that Pali is the "inherent essence language" (*sabhava, nirutti*), hard-wired into the fabric of existence: if a child were to be brought up with no external linguistic influence, it would naturally speak Pali. (Sujato 2004b:216)

**12.2 WORSHIPPING SATIPATTHANA.** Many contemporary Buddhist meditation teachers and practitioners are concerned at how a meditation text like the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta has turned into an object of worship. **Sujato** recalls:

I have been conscious of the radical difference between these modes of textual learning ever since I learnt the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta by heart over ten years ago. We have already

<sup>463</sup> **HL Seneviratne**, *The Works of Kings*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. Amongst other things, Seneviratne writes disapprovingly of modern Sinhalese monks for their interest "in land and other forms booty, monopoly over education, perpetuation of caste and other forms of inequality, and pressure group activity for the maintenance of its privileges by appeal to one or another variation of the chorus 'country, nation, and religion'" (203). His main target is the entrepreneurial monks who reside in urban monasteries along the western coast, who spend their time cultivating foreign patrons in the cause of international travel and self-promotion (212). He even recounts the rumour that a well-known Vidyānāra monk was involved in gems smuggling, transforming statues with relic chambers into caches for concealing precious stones (196).

<sup>464</sup> *Gaṅgā peyyālā* (S 45.91-138/5:38-41).

seen that the evidence is congruent with a date of compilation for the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and possibly also the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, at around this same time (*circa* 20 BCE). This would suggest that these texts, rather than being meditation teachings, as would appear, were a fossilization of already ancient scripture into a form suitable for theoretical study. In this sense they might be compared with the Paṭisambhidāmagga, the Visuddhimagga, or indeed the many contemporary books and manuals on meditation by monks and scholars who themselves have never meditated.<sup>465</sup>

The worship, as opposed to practice, of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is a remarkable and undeniable feature of modern Theravāda. **Venerable Nyanaponika**, in his classic *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, waxes lyrical:

In Lanka for instance, the isle of Ceylon, when on fullmoon days lay devotees observe eight of the ten principal precepts of novice monks, staying for the day and the night in the monastery, they frequently choose this Sutta to read, recite, listen to, and contemplate. Still, in many a home, the satipatthana book is reverently wrapped in a clean cloth, and from time to time, in the evening, it is read to members of the family. Often this discourse is recited at the bedside of a dying Buddhist, so that in the last hour of his life, his heart may be set on, consoled, and gladdened by the Master's great message of liberation. Though ours is an age of print, it is still customary in Ceylon to have new palm-leaf manuscripts of the Sutta written by scribes, and to offer them to the library of a monastery. A collection of nearly two hundred such manuscripts of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, some with costly covers, was seen by the writer in an old monastery of Ceylon. (1962:11)

The author discreetly avoids noticing that in this atmosphere of reverential awe the question of practicing the instructions in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta does not arise. The irrationality of accumulating hundreds of copies of manuscripts on meditation in a monastery where, doubtless, not a single monk has ever thought of actually meditating is a classic symptom of religious fetishism. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta has been transformed into a magical totem. Please notice that this eulogy of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as fetish appears at the beginning of the single most influential and widely read book on contemporary Theravāda vipassana meditation. It is explicitly invoked to magnify the aura of sanctity surrounding the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as a key aspect of the *vipassanā, vāda* agenda.

Of course, Venerable Nyanaponika was himself a meditator and a perceptive scholar, and his work contains much of value. He also, as a German monk living in Sri Lanka, remained free of the jingoistic, narrow nationalism that Seneviratne deplors so eloquently.

(Sujato 2004b:217)

**12.3 MONKS OF THE WORLD.** Seneviratne also criticizes **Walpola Rāhula**,<sup>466</sup> who in *The History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (1956) and *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu* (1974) advocates a Buddhism that “glorifies social intercourse with lay society...the receipt of salaries and other forms of material remuneration; militancy in politics; and violence, war and the spilling of blood in the name of ‘preserving the religion’” (1999:186). Practising Buddhists like **Sujato**, however, are more concerned regarding the damage that such developments bring to Buddhism:

<sup>465</sup> On the need of going beyond academic book-learning, see §3.9a above.

<sup>466</sup> On **Walpola Rahula**, see also SJ Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992: 22-29 (ch 5). Tambiah notes that “...in the 1950s, when he [Rahula] conducted his research in Paris in association with Professor Demiéville, he devised a distinctive clothing of trousers and cap to withstand the cold and sometimes relaxed the rule regarding meals, thereby again demonstrating that he would not allow conventional rules to obstruct the pursuit of more worthwhile and serious goals” (1992:24). Speaking of freelance adjustments of monastic rules, one might add here the peculiar habit amongst some young (and not so young) Theravāda monks of keeping their head unshaven and thick with hair so that they look like laymen. The Vinaya rule says: “Monks, long hair should not be worn. Whoever should wear it long, there is an offence of wrongdoing (*dukkata*). I allow it to be of two months’ growth or two fingers’ breadth long.” (Cv 5.2.2 = V 2:106). Could this be that there is a tacit acquiescence to the abrogation of the “lesser and minor rules” despite the ruling of the Rājagaha Council? In which case, could such monks regard themselves as part of the Theravada monastic community?

The purity of the Pali canon is intrinsic to the Sinhalese religious, cultural, and racial identity. Much of the Sri Lankan monastic Sangha openly supports and justifies bloody warfare in defence of the exalted ideal of Sri Lanka as the upholder of the pristine Dhamma. One of the prime advocates of monastic laxity in Vinaya and involvement in politics was the scholar Walpola Rahula, whose praise of satipatthana in his classic *What the Buddha Taught* is quoted at the beginning of *A History of Mindfulness*. Like so many others, my introduction to Buddhism was through *What the Buddha Taught*. I remember being moved to tears, especially, by his glowing account of the greatest renouncer of war in political history, King Asoka.

However, although I have not seen it recorded that Rahula ever followed the Buddha's instructions and meditated, he certainly followed his own advice and embroiled the Sangha in sectarian, racist, and violent politics. Learning of the vast gulf between theory and practice in Rahula's own life, I cannot help but feel a deep sense of betrayal and shame for the Sangha.

Like the fetishistic usage of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the roots of this development may be traced to the ancient chronicles. Evaluation of the textual sources never happens in a historical vacuum. No doubt my work will be seen in certain quarters as an attack on Sri Lankan national pride, and will be criticized accordingly. What can I say? I have so much love for Sinhalese people and so much respect for their preservation of the Dhamma that it pains me to see such things, and pains me even more to speak about them; but the Dhamma cannot survive unless we Buddhists are capable of genuine self-examination. (Sujato 2004b:217 f)

**12.4 COMMENTARIAL SUTTAS.** Although many Myanmar Buddhists, like their Sinhalese counterparts, idolize the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the former are also renowned in their meditation tradition. However, sadly, there are some sharp thorns on the Burmese meditation seat, as **Sujato** observes:

In **Myanmar**, the home of the *vipassanā, vāda*, the situation is different. I have not had the chance to see an analysis as penetrative as Seneviratne's on the troubled question of relations between the Sangha and the brutal military dictatorship. It is noteworthy that the shining moral giant of Myanmar is not a monk, but a meditating laywoman, **Aung San Suu Kyi**.

In Myanmar, scholarly standards, judging by the quality of the official translations, are poor; this is not merely a matter of unfamiliarity with English, but a deliberate alteration of the scriptures to agree with the commentaries.<sup>467</sup> Studies are characterized by a relentless insistence on commentarial orthodoxy. Monastic laxity is not as bad as Sri Lanka, and there is a strong meditation practice, both lay and monastic. The scene is, however, dominated by a divisive sectarianism, each monastery claiming that its own "system" is the best.

Such divisiveness is manifest evidence of emotional underdevelopment, which is hardly surprising in light of the low status given to meditation on loving-kindness and compassion. A remarkable example of this is **Mahasi Sayadaw's** exposition on compassion. Incredibly, he devotes considerable space to warning of compassion's dangers, for example: "Karuna [compassion] is said to have the basic quality of preventing one's own happiness from occur-

<sup>467</sup> This tendency is so rampant that it does not need much elaboration, but those unfamiliar with the texts should be warned. One typical example will suffice. The important verse **Sn [1076]** in Pali is as follows:

*Atthaṅgatassa na pamāṇam atthi | Yena naṃ vaju, taṃ tassa n'atthi*  
*Sabbesu dhammesu samūhatesu | Samūhatā vāda, pathā pi sabbe' ti*

It may be translated something like this:

There is no measure for one who has ended | He has nothing by which he may be described  
When all dhammas have been destroyed | Destroyed, too, are all ways of speech.

The official Myanmar tr of Sn is by **the Sitagu International Buddhist Academy** (2002):

(Replied the Buddha) "O Upasiva, one who has entered Nibbana is beyond any concept of existence. Where there is a certain degree of defilement in one, he is liable to be called by that defilement (such as, greedy): But one on entering Nibbana is devoid of any defilement. No aggregates are present there, no sensual bases are there, etc. So there's no nomenclature left there." (2002:189 in the second half of the book **Suttanipatapali**).

The verse is barely recognizable. The words "Nibbana," "concept of existence," "certain degree," "defilement," "aggregates," "sensual bases, etc." have been interpolated, largely from the Commentary. The translator has put some of his interpolations in brackets, which conveys the entirely misleading impression that what is not bracketed is actually found in the Pali. (Sujato's fn; normalized)

ring.<sup>468</sup> It seems, then, that the Mahayana critique of the selfish “Hinayanists” has some validity. (Sujato 2004b:218)

**12.5 THE MIDDLE OF THE MIDDLE WAY.** In our own times, **Thailand**<sup>469</sup> has produced some of the world’s leading forest monks, like Ajahn Chah, whose disciples (Ajahns Sumedho, Brahmavamso and Sujato) have set up forest monasteries worldwide. **Sujato** comments:

**The Thai meditation traditions** typically prefer a more pragmatic, experiential, and less dogmatic approach, integrating rather than dividing samatha and vipassana, and so divisiveness based on meditation schools is refreshingly absent.

I must admit I do find it of concern when I see meditation systems whose goal is to experientially realize the elements of “ultimate truth” as elaborated by commentarial theorists. To anyone approaching the matter with a rudimentary understanding of the history of philosophy it is obvious that the Abhidhamma/commentarial systems are theoretical constructs developed in a scholastic environment, far removed from the Buddha in time and spirit.

Unfortunately, the Buddhist education in these countries is so narrow that the monks do not, in fact, have this rudimentary understanding, and interpret academic speculations as experiential truth. It is doubtful whether the authors of these scholastic tractates ever thought of using them for meditation. But thousands of devoted followers do, and invest vast effort into making the theory real. (Sujato 2004b:218)

With the rise in popularity of Buddhism and Buddhist meditation amongst academics and non-Buddhists, especially in the West, we can now see a growing commodification of Buddhism and Buddhist-inspired meditation and therapies. It is common for professional therapists to take up some form of Buddhist training (such as spending a duration as monastics), only to go on their own steam and introduce their own brand of meditation therapy with their own clinics and ideologies.

Many prestigious meditation centres and lucrative courses have mushroomed, and meditation instructors are in great demand worldwide. However, there are some disturbing trends, especially by way of strongly biased approaches and triumphalism. **Sujato**, however, proposes a way of conciliation:

It is worth reflecting on this curious fact: differences in meditation techniques, divided precisely along the lines of samatha versus vipassana, are among the most divisive issues in Buddhism. We invest a lot in our meditation, a lot of time, a lot of effort, a lot of pain; and so we attach, much more deeply than to mere theory. Differences in approach and emphasis to meditation can harden into defensiveness as to who’s got the right “system,” and the interpretation of doctrine is then shaped to suit, with a strident insistence on the primacy of one’s own take on “ultimate reality.”

This being so, it would seem that an approach to meditation that emphasized the essential harmony and complementariness of samatha and vipassana would be a healing force in the Buddhist community. This would allow us to appreciate the benefits of the various approaches to meditation without insisting on any one of them as absolute and sufficient for everyone. In this we would be following in the tolerant footsteps of the Buddha, accepting whatever spiritual practices are good and in line with the dhamma, while avoiding the dogmatic extremes of metaphysics. (Sujato 2004b:219)

### **13 The importance of satipatthana**

The second section (*vagga*) of the **Anuruddha Saṃyutta** [10] contains a long series of texts where Anuruddha declares that it is by the practice of satipatthana that he has developed various

<sup>468</sup> Mahasi Sayadaw, *Brahmavihara Dhamma*. Yangon: Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Organization, 1985:191.

<sup>469</sup> However, some scholars have noticed that beginning with centralized government control of the Sangha about a century ago, a significant sector of the Council-regulated and State-salaried Thai Sangha has become complacent and infiltrated by careerists. There were a number of scandals involving monks guilty of sexual abuse and drug and alcohol abuse. Thailand saw the rise of the fundamental Santi Asoke and the consumerist Dhammakaya, and also the influx of new religions, such as Sekai Kyusei-kyo, Sukyo Mahikari, Sathya Sai Baba, Falungong and the Unification Church. See **Sanitsuda Ekachai**, *Keeping the Faith: Thai Buddhism at the Crossroads*. Bangkok: Post Books, 2001.

spiritual powers. Among these are the six direct knowledges,<sup>470</sup> divided into two sections,<sup>471</sup> which are usually ascribed to the practice of the four paths of accomplishment (*iddhi,pāda*).<sup>472</sup> Here Bodhi notes:

The assertion that they result from the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* means that the latter method need not be understood as exclusively a system of insight meditation (a widespread view) but can also be seen as a path conducive to the fulfillment of all the jhānas. (S:B 1515)

The **Vedanā Saṃyutta** contains two interesting suttas where satipatthana is taught to sick monks, that is, **the Gilāna Sutta 1-2**.<sup>473</sup> Here one should cultivate the four satipatthanas, have clear awareness, and then observe the conditionality and impermanence of feelings. **Sujato** provides an interesting insight into these two suttas:

Both these discourses occur next to each other in the *saṃyutta* (although in the Sarvāstivāda they are in another *saṃyutta*, dealing with illness), and they are both given in the identical setting, the Hall with the Peaked Roof in the Great Wood of Vesālī. This is an unusual location, and begs the question why two such almost identical discourses were given here and nowhere else. The only difference between the two is that the first states that feeling is conditioned by the body, while the second says feeling is conditioned by contact.

The latter is obviously the normal position of the Suttas, repeated many times in the Vedanā-saṃyutta itself, so the statement that feelings arise dependent on the body must remain under a question-mark. In fact it seems likely that we are really dealing with one text, and fairly early on the word “body” was substituted for “contact,” perhaps by mistake, to yield a pair of discourses. (2004b:143)

**The Cunda Sutta** (S 47.13/5:161-163) and **the Ukkacela Sutta** (S 47.14/5:164 f) record that following the deaths of Sāriputta and of Mahā Moggallāna, the Buddha exhorts the monks to “live as islands unto yourselves,” that is, alluding to the practice of the four focusses of mindfulness for the sake of the longevity of the Buddha’s Teaching. Similarly, three early texts—**the Ṭhiti Sutta** (S 47.22/5:173), **the Parihāna Sutta** (S 47.23/5:173 f) and **the Suddhaka Sutta** (S 47.25/5:174)—attest to the vitality of satipatthana as the reason for the longevity of the Buddha’s Teaching as enshrined in the Buddha’s last instructions, thus:

Therefore, Ānanda, you should **live as islands unto yourselves**,<sup>474</sup> being your own refuge, with no one else as your refuge, with the Dharma as an island,<sup>475</sup> with the Dharma as your refuge, with no other refuge. And how does a monk live as an island unto himself... with no other refuge?

Here, Ānanda, a monk abides contemplating the body in the body, earnestly, clearly aware, mindful and having removed all covetousness and discontent for the world, and likewise with regard to feelings, mind and dharmas. That, bhikkhus, is how a monk lives as an island unto himself... with no other refuge.

<sup>470</sup> “**The six direct knowledges**” (*cha-l-abhiññā*) or “superknowledges,” comprises 5 mundane (*lokiya*) powers attainable through the highest perfection of mental concentration (*samādhi*), and one supramundane (*lok’uttara*) power, attainable through penetrating insight (*vipassanā*), ie the extinction of all mental cankers (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāna*) or arhathood. The 7 direct knowledges are: (1) psychic powers (*iddhi,vidhā*), (2) the divine ear or clairaudience (*dibba,sota*), (3) penetration of the mind of others or mind-reading (*ceto,pariya,ñāna*), (4) the divine eye or clairvoyance (*dibba,cakkhu*), (5) recollection of former existences (*pubbe,nivāsānussati*), (6) destruction of mental cankers (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāna*) (D 34; M 4, 6, 77; A 3.99, 5.23; S 15.9; Pug 27, 239).

<sup>471</sup> S 52.12-14/5:303 f, 22-24/5:305.

<sup>472</sup> *Iddhi,pāda*, see SD 10.3.

<sup>473</sup> S 36.7/4:210-213, 36.8/4:213 f.

<sup>474</sup> P *atta,dīpa*, Skt *ātma,dvīpa*. See S:B 1921 n143.

<sup>475</sup> “Island,” P *dhmma.dīpa*, Skt *dharmā,dvīpa*.



And those who now in my time or afterwards live thus, they will become the highest,<sup>476</sup>  
but **they must be anxious to learn.** (D 2:101 = 3:58, 77; S 3:42, 5:154, 163, 164)

— — —

050404; rev 071207; 080419a

---

<sup>476</sup> “The highest,” *tamatagge*. On the difficult term, *tamatagge* (“the highest”), see *Last Days of the Buddha*. (D no 16). Tr (rev ed) Sister Vajirā & Francis Story. Wheel 67/68/69. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1998: n20. <http://www.accesstoinight.org/canon/digha/dn16.html>